THE ULTIMATE RECORD COLLECTION

THE 500 Greatest Albums Of The 1970s ...ranked!

(Spoiler: they're in)

FROM THE MAKERS OF UNCUT

POPULAR * CL

BRIAN COOKE/REDFERNS

CONTENTS

4 INTRODUCTION
As the LP truly finds itself, a decade of brilliance – and self-indulgence – unfolds

8 COUNTDOWN
500-401

18 INTERVIEW! KEN SCOTT
The Bowie producer looks back on an age of unrestrained creativity

22 COUNTDOWN
400-101

52 ARCHIVE FEATURE
KATE BUSH
An eerie encounter with a "singular personality" as she unveils her second LP

56 COUNTDOWN
100-81

64 COUNTDOWN
THE TOP 20
The in-depth reviews commence here – with Joni Mitchell's fearless *Hejira*

90 ARCHIVE FEATURE
THE ROLLING STONES
Mick Jagger turns a press event for *Exile...* into a state-of-the-nation address

104 ARCHIVE FEATURE
DAVID BOWIE
Litigation, Eno, Muzak, dysentry... Tony Visconti discusses the making of *Low*

114 ARCHIVE FEATURE
TELEVISION
MM's Allan Jones has his mind blown by Tom Verlaine and co on a trip to Glasgow

118 THE MOST COLLECTABLE ALBUMS OF THE DECADE
Notebooks out, cratediggers!

120 MISCELLANY
Quadrophonic sound, die-cut sleeves, deliberate "mistakes"... and 29 other quirks of the 1970s long-player

122 I WAS THERE!
Artist Roger Dean on game-changing '70s album sleeves, a "sky ark", and sharing a flat with Syd Barrett

WELCOME

To the *Greatest Albums of the 1970s...Ranked!*

IT didn't take too long for Dylan's dictum "Don't look back" to become a thing of the past. Primed no doubt by local nostalgia events like the London Rock'n'Roll Show (Wembley Stadium, 1972) and films like George Lucas's *American Graffiti* (cinemas nationwide, 1973), by the mid-1970s it seemed permissible even for a Dylanwise paper like the *New Musical Express* to run a retrospective list of the 100 greatest albums of all time.

What seems a little odd – a list instantly turns everyone into a critic – is that they thought that this particular moment (with *Diamond Dogs* at the starting line, *The Dark Side Of The Moon* continuing its cycle, test pressings of "It's Only Rock'n'Roll" surely being spun on the office stereo) was the time to take stock. Or perhaps it was something simpler: the dominance of The Carpenters' *The Singles 1968–73* in the albums charts making them yearn for happier, perhaps more revolutionary times.

Whatever the reason they undertook it, the *NME* list of nearly 50 years ago allows us to be impressed by how quickly rock quality stood out – even today we wouldn't disagree with their choices on The Rolling Stones, The Who or Led Zeppelin – but it does speak to the dominance of white guitar artists. The 1970s was such a boom time for music production and sales that we've been spending the years since happily trying to make sense of its riches. Reggae and dub. The widescreen take on what originated as "soul" music, now made epic in the hands of auteurs like Curtis Mayfield, the Temptations and Stevie Wonder. The new music from Germany, made by Can, Kraftwerk and Neu!. Brazilian singer-songwriters. British innovators like Bowie, Fripp and Eno...

Impossible to make sense of otherwise, democracy has allowed us to see how the years have acted on 1970s music. Clearly we now listen to a lot more jazz, and music from other countries. It's also good to note that there's been a changing of the guard. In a time when the 50th-anniversary reissue of *The Dark Side Of The Moon* offers no more surprises than the kind of box it comes in, it's good to note how the big hitters of our Top 20 aren't solely the albums you'd have found stacked in every older brother's bedroom in 1974.

Here instead are artistic breakthroughs; albums to rally a cause, or mobilise a generation, and at least five which dismantle music to rebuild it from the ground up. All are worth your deep consideration because they have made it this far, and seem unlikely to be going anywhere. There's even a Dylan album. They're why we make lists. And why, even when we're surrounded by great new music, we still can't resist looking back for more.

JOHN ROBINSON, EDITOR

KELSEY MEDIA, THE GRANARY DOWNS COURT, YALDING HILL, YALDING, MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME18 6AL

EDITOR John Robinson
ART EDITOR Marc Jones
SENIOR DESIGNER Michael Chapman
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT Mark Beaumont

PRODUCTION EDITOR Mick Meikleham
SENIOR SUB EDITOR Mike Johnson
PICTURE EDITOR Phil King
THANKS THIS ISSUE Lora Findlay (design), Johnny Sharp (subbing)

PUBLISHER Gareth Beesley

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MUSIC TO BE TAKEN SITTING DOWN

... the long-player enters the 1970s, and finds itself

THE organisers of Disco Demolition Night – a publicity stunt staged in the innings breaks as Chicago White Sox hosted Detroit Tigers on July 12, 1979 at the city's Comiskey Park – badly underestimated the intense feelings aroused by the ubiquity of the *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack.

Having booked security and police to cater for a crowd of 35,000, panic began to set in when more like 60,000 turned up, greeting the explosion on the field in which a huge crate of disco records were ritually destroyed with a destructive pitch invasion. "People brought ladders," the Tigers' Rusty Staub remembered. "They were climbing in from the outside. It was like a riot."

A slightly impotent revenge attack on the part of future Donald Trump voters, nettled that they could no longer hear "Sweet Home Alabama" on mainstream radio, Disco Demolition Night drew something of a line under what might have been rock's greatest decade. Exhausted by the amount of change that had taken place in the space of 10 years, some could take no more.

The 1970s was once written off as a parade of bad fashion decisions that happened after The Beatles split up; an aberration which everyone gratefully put behind them once the Sex Pistols' Steve Jones heralded a new age by calling TV presenter Bill Grundy "a fucking rotter" on live TV. The decade was garish and gormless at times, and the fact that Pink Floyd's ponderous 1973 offering *The Dark Side Of The Moon* stayed on the US charts for 741 weeks certainly signalled a complacent sag in the middle, but rock's awkward adolescent years were also packed with giddy thrills and intense awakenings. Enormous quantities of great records came out, and some of them even sold.

The release of The Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* on May 26, 1967 set a significant pattern in terms of the mechanics of the pop industry which would define the following decade. The first properly marketed "event" record, it marked the beginning of an album-oriented pop culture, 'rock' joining jazz, folk and classical as music to be taken sitting down. LPs were certainly a better business proposition for record labels than seven-inch singles, with a higher cover price, a bigger mark-up, a broader generational appeal and a significantly longer shelf-life. As the 1960s ended, the door was open for the nascent "underground" acts to make full use of those five extra inches per side.

The Small Faces' *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake* (1968) and The Who's *Tommy* (1969) went some way to exploring that extra space, but as the 1970s dawned, artists approached that newly broadened canvas with new levels of brilliance and self-indulgence. Miles Davis's groundbreaking rock-into-jazz double LP *Bitches Brew*, released in 1970, contains just six tracks; the Soft Machine's four-sided *Third*, released later the same year, has only four.

Plenty of keynote releases of the age were a matter of taking existing ideas to thrilling extremes: the proto heavy metal grunt of Led Zeppelin, The Stooges and Black Sabbath, the dirty Jimi Hendrix of the first Funkadelic records. However, plenty more came from a conscious desire to conquer new terrain and go further outside the canon than even The Beatles had managed.

Hated by most jazz critics at the time ("repetitious

JONI MITCHELL
BLUE
REPRISE, 1971

crap," wrote one), Miles Davis's street rhapsody *On The Corner* integrated ideas from Karlheinz Stockhausen, while Cologne-based former Stockhausen students Holger Czukay and Irmin Schmidt went global as they improvised towards pioneering soundscapes with Can.

"The one thing we had in common was listening to ethnic music," said keyboard player Schmidt. "I was into Japanese medieval court music, Noh theatre music and Bugaku. [Drummer] Jaki [Liebezeit] was into Arabian music. And [guitarist Michael Karoli] and I were both big admirers of Balinese music – we were chasing after every tape."

Less well regarded in retrospect, but infinitely more popular at the time, the technique-heavy works of the British progressive rockers stemmed from a similarly adventurous spirit, with Genesis and Emerson, Lake & Palmer stirring classical themes, science fiction and a good deal of proto-New Age guff into their mega-selling albums.

In the United States, the patience of artist-friendly majors like Reprise, Elektra and Asylum paid off with artistic and commercial successes for the likes of Neil Young and Joni Mitchell, ensuring that there were funds for the more esoteric efforts of Judee Sill and Jobriath. In the UK, head-friendly diffusion labels – Harvest, Vertigo, Dawn, et al – and early-adopters Island made enough money on commercial long-shots like Jethro Tull and Pink Floyd to justify taking a punt on a huge array of unsaleable Brit jazz, prog and folk. Even Comus's borderline-unlistenable hippie horror epic *First Utterance* (1971) had a route to market, even if no-one bought it when it was there.

The OPEC oil crisis of 1973 significantly increased the manufacturing costs of vinyl records and cooled the boots of label A&R departments, but mainstream hard rock – Queen, Bad Company and 1960s survivors like Status Quo and Deep Purple – continued to justify investment. In the UK, meanwhile, T.Rex's elfin boogie heralded the advent of landfill glam and the wider-ranging successes of more able shape-shifters, art-rock genii like David Bowie and Roxy Music.

However, if the pace of change seemed to slow as Elton John and Rod Stewart crossed the Atlantic, 1974, 1975 and 1976 were nowhere near as desperate as later commentators would suggest. Patti Smith's *Horses*, the first Ramones album, Kraftwerk's *Autobahn*, Bob Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks* and Bruce Springsteen's *Born To Run* were all released during that supposed mid-decade drought, while more amazing stuff lurked in the margins. The ascent of roots and dub reggae signalled Jamaica's artistic peak, while the first works by San Francisco oddballs The Residents, New York art punk band Television and Cleveland nihilists Pere Ubu were self-released during those years, seemingly prompted by the frustration that (for what must have been no more than a matter of months) nothing particularly exciting had happened.

"When Pere Ubu formed, there was lots of local bands who were playing the main rock venues who could do covers of Spirit just perfect and we just thought there was more to it than this," Ubu frontman David Thomas told *Uncut*. "We despaired at the ordinariness of it."

For such high-minded aesthetes, the roundhead revolution of punk (and the failed pub-rock putsch that preceded it) was something of a let-down. The Sex Pistols were over in one thrilling flash, while The Clash's "I'm So Bored With The USA" shtick did not preclude them going on to work for the Yankee dollar fairly cravenly in the years ahead. Johnny Rotten dispelled any remaining year-zero idealism as he came out as a Peter Hammill fan when he transitioned back to being John Lydon, but the space punk cleared was to be a fertile one.

Throbbing Gristle's *Second Annual Report* (1977) spawned 80 per cent of all horrible serial-killer-fixated art noise, while Rough Trade's distribution network and The Desperate Bicycles' DIY clarion call "It was cheap, it was easy, go and do it" inspired a legion of cheapo innovators who would shape the new decade. The Human League and Scritti Politti stumbled from austerity towards a new pop opulence, while the Slits' *Cut* and the Raincoats' debut album, both 1979, found women scratching out a different kind of space in what was still a largely Neanderthal, very male world.

The uppity punks certainly nettled the older guard; punk versus Ted violence was briefly vogueish in England, while audiences seemingly turned out for the Sex Pistols' ill-fated US tour – as documented in Lech Kowalski's depressing 1978 documentary *DOA* – just to throw things at them. However, 1970s rock fans found disco to be a more profound existential threat.

The genre's brutal apogee, Donna Summer's sequencer-driven "I Feel Love" (1977), opposed all rock'n'roll; Giorgio Moroder's cold, mechanical production was a universe away from holy rock concepts like authenticity and technique, and heralded a decade which would be ruled from the dancefloor, and in which Bowie's spiritual children would help make artifice an art form of its own. Thousands of records went up in smoke at Disco Demolition Night, but the 1980s could not be stopped.

● *JIM WIRTH*

BOB DYLAN
BLOOD ON THE TRACKS
COLUMBIA, 1975

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
BORN TO RUN
COLUMBIA, 1975

KRAFTWERK
AUTOBAHN
PHILIPS, 1974

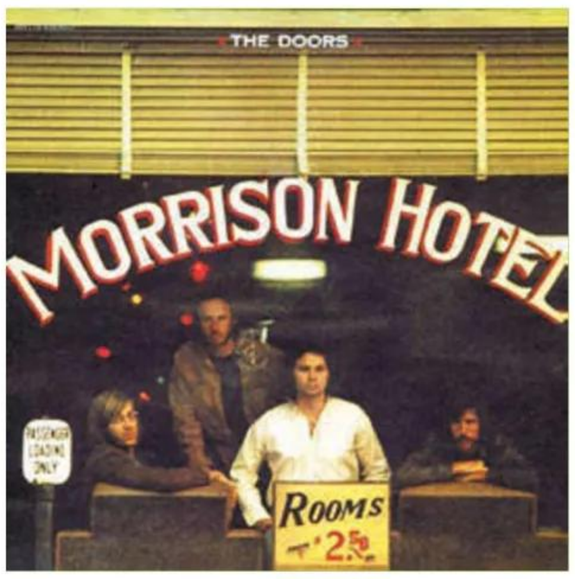
THE SLITS
CUT
ISLAND, 1979

500 HAWKWIND
QUARK, STRANGENESS AND CHARM
CHARISMA, 1976

With Robert Calvert back supplying the science fiction and Simon House the modal violin, Hawkwind were the same, but different. Armed with excellent tunes and mildly irresponsible revolutionary chic, here the band futureproofed themselves for the late 1970s.

499 MIKE OLDFIELD
TUBULAR BELLS
VIRGIN, 1973

Once a diffident teenage sideman on Kevin Ayers records, Mike Oldfield became the foundation on which the Virgin empire was built. Comically ubiquitous for a while there, it contains stunning moments that still sound impressive today.



496 THE DOORS
MORRISON HOTEL
ELEKTRA, 1970

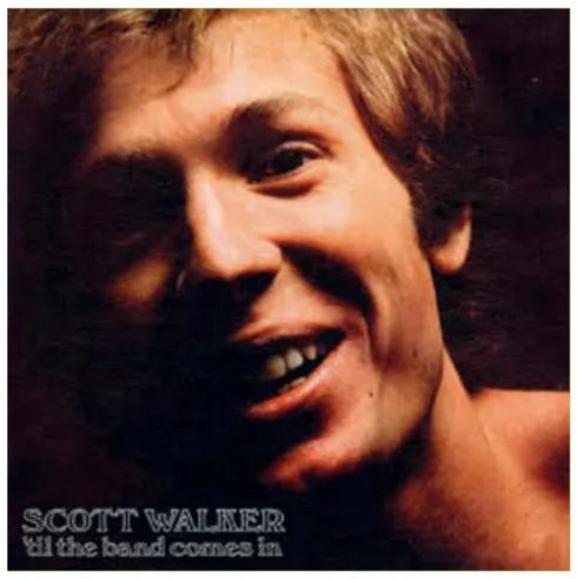
They would leave on a poetic high less than a year later. *Morrison Hotel*, however, found The Doors in form as a bar-room combo. Funky and gritty throughout, "Roadhouse Blues" was the de facto anthem, where the band's self-destructive legend and bawdy practice merged.

495 FELA KUTI
ZOMBIE
BARCLAY, 1976

Insistent, detailed Afrobeat with drastic consequences. Kuti's vocal criticism of Nigeria's military (the "zombie" of the title) was alleged to have resulted in his mother's killing and the destruction of his commune.

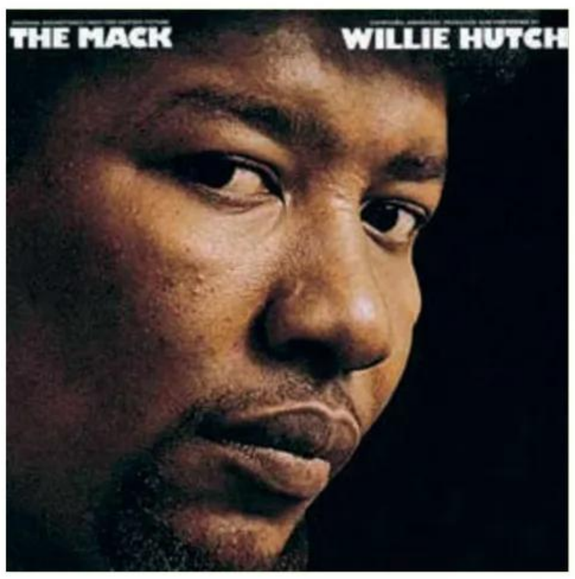
492 KLAUS SCHULZE
TIMEWIND
CAROLINE, 1975

Before going solo, Schulze's form was serious – Tangerine Dream, Ash Ra Tempel, Cosmic Jokers. *Timewind* is one of his better solo albums, a timeless, cyber-monster wig-out of epic proportions.



491 SCOTT WALKER
'TIL THE BAND COMES IN
PHILIPS, 1970

Rather overshadowed by his four late-'60s classics, there is still some gorgeous Walker here. A kitchen sink drama – it begins with the sound of a dripping tap, there is mention of *"meals on wheels"* – it's a concept about a tenement building, but lushly done.



488 WILLIE HUTCH
THE MACK
MOTOWN, 1973

A Motown graduate lives up to his songwriting promise with a Blaxploitation soundtrack from the golden age. A vehicle for Max Julien and Richard Pryor becomes elevated via these sophisticated arrangements for strings and widescreen wah-wah.

487 THE LAST POETS
THE LAST POETS
DOUGLAS, 1970

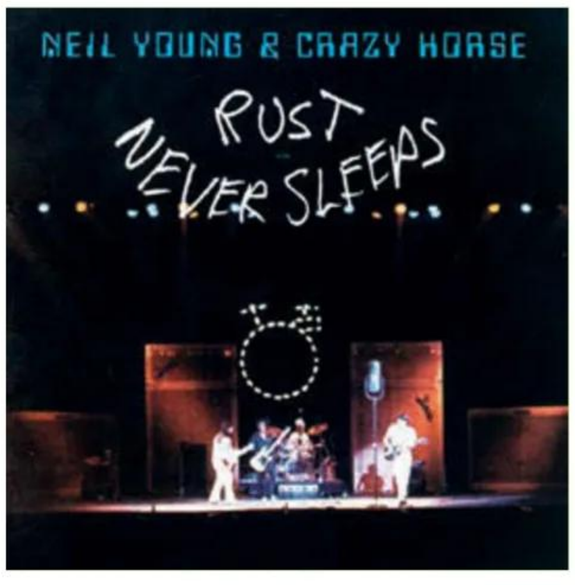
Influential debut from the pioneering New York trio for Hendrix confidant and hipster Alan Douglas's label. A striking blend of jazz, poetry and proto-rap, it reached a wider audience after the track "Wake Up, Niggers" featured in the film *Performance*.

484 THE BEACH BOYS
SUNFLOWER
REPRISE, 1970

The fallout from *SMiLE* continued into the next decade. A democratic songwriting policy yields strong input from Dennis Wilson, but Bruce Johnston's "Tears In The Morning" and Brian's "Cool Cool Water" shine brightest.

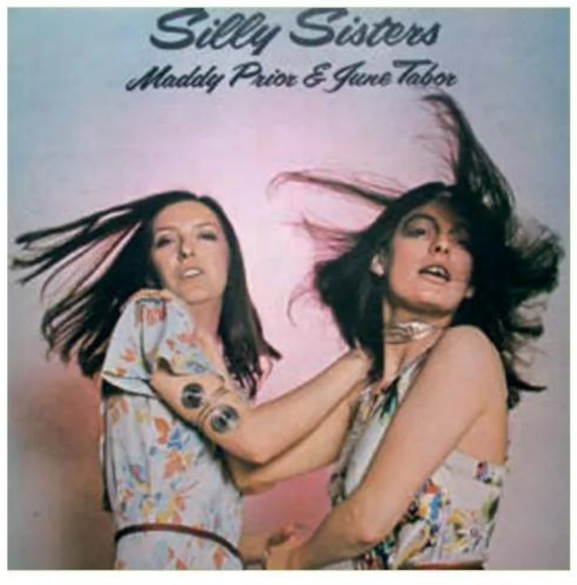
483 BE-BOP DELUXE
SUNBURST FINISH
HARVEST, 1976

Hovering somewhere between Roxy and Magazine, Bill Nelson's gang record their masterpiece. A mutant glam-rock art-pop slam, it brought their first significant hit with "Ships In The Night".



498 NEIL YOUNG
RUST NEVER SLEEPS
REPRISE, 1978

There was more to the picture than met the eye. Emerging from the ditch, Neil was in better condition to play to the conscience of a 1960s generation entering middle age. Some of his most staggering songs ("Powderfinger") and his most incendiary rock'n'roll.



497 MADDY PRIOR & JUNE TABOR
SILLY SISTERS
CHRYSALIS, 1976

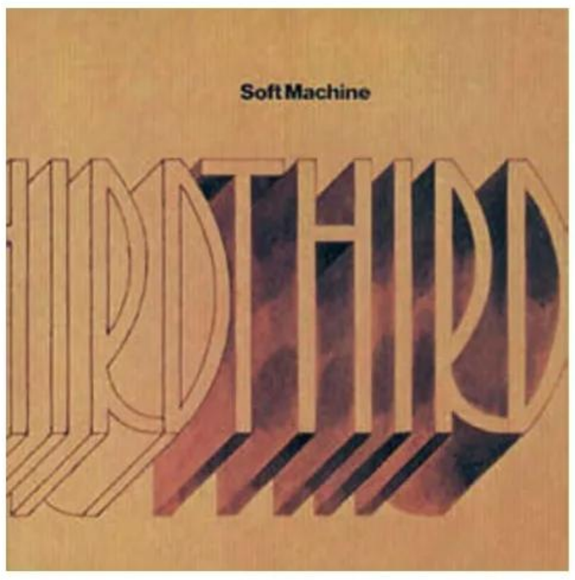
Even in a golden age of English folk rock, the playing here – by Richard Thompson, Martin Carthy, Danny Thompson – is superb. Stop then and consider the might of the singing. A place where secular songs assume a sacred poise and power.

494 ARETHA FRANKLIN
YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK
ATLANTIC, 1972

Aretha's imperial phase at Atlantic continued. Grammy winner from which six cuts were released as singles, including covers of Elton John's "Border Song" and the Nina Simone-associated title track.

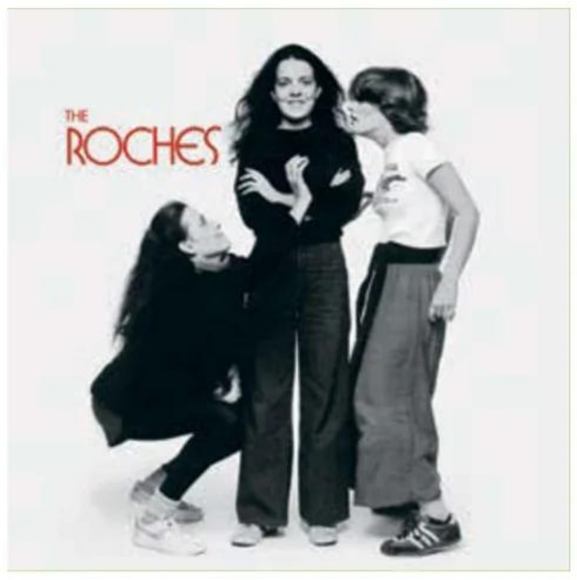
493 GIL SCOTT-HERON/BRIAN JACKSON
WINTER IN AMERICA
STRATA-EAST, 1974

Peace go with you. Jackson soothed with his enfolding and soulful jazz hymn; Scott-Heron tore the place down with his incendiary vulnerability. Includes the classic "The Bottle".



490 SOFT MACHINE
THIRD
COLUMBIA, 1970

Double album with just one track per side. Robert Wyatt's "Moon In June" is lyrical and lovely, but does rather show the gulf between his innate charm and the band's front-foot jazz-fusion. Out-bloody-rageous indeed!



489 THE ROCHES
THE ROCHES
WARNER BROS, 1979

Robert Fripp assists on this much-loved debut. Super-talented New Jersey trio, with McGarrigle-like talents and wit, here beguiled with inventive post-folk harmonies, pithy lyrics and pop twists. And "Hammond Song", blimey.

486 GENESIS
THE LAMB LIES DOWN ON BROADWAY
CHARISMA, 1974

After several albums of Victorian whimsy, Genesis ventured further afield for a more distinct concept piece. This was about a young Puerto Rican man's outlandish experiences in New York – and marked Peter Gabriel's last recordings with the band.

485 THE RUTS
THE CRACK
VIRGIN, 1979

Surprising, still, to put on *The Crack* and hear such a disciplined yet wild riot, a pop/rock/reggae kaleidoscope, full of anthemic one-liners and coal-black guitar riffage. Accessible, infectious statement from the sadly short-lived concern.

482 SPIRIT
SPIRIT OF '76
MERCURY, 1975

The dream team of Randy California and Ed Cassidy came up trumps here, a kind of psychedelic folk-rock odyssey that loosely hymns the bicentennial of the declaration of independence.

481 QUEEN
SHEER HEART ATTACK
EMI, 1974

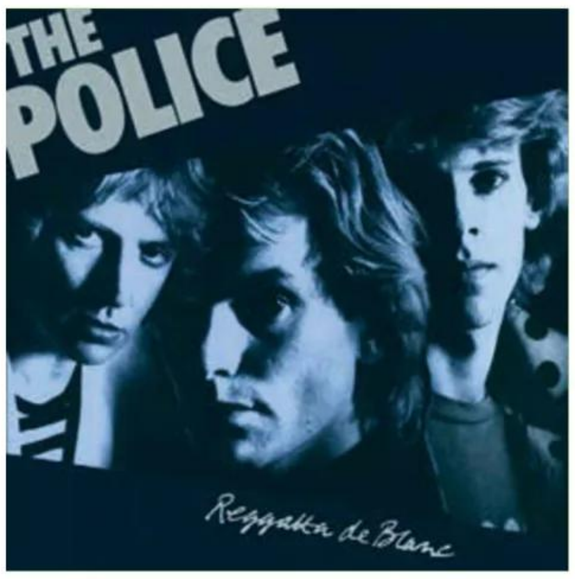
Wherein you hear Queen's separate elements – old-school hard-rock virtuosity; camp humour and West End-musical-style songs – trying to make a coherent whole. A unique force in British rock begins to take shape – and in "Killer Queen" truly does so.

480 999
SEPARATES
UNITED ARTISTS, 1978

Martin Rushent is on hand to assist with sparkle on their second effort, but not much has changed for these London punks. It's simple but effective, mainlining riffs and strangled vox, bordering on anthemic at times.

479 BERT JANSCH
ROSEMARY LANE
TRANSATLANTIC, 1971

While rock indulges, Jansch sticks to his guns on the first of several strong 1970s albums. Masterful acoustic originals and inventive trad arr treatments, sung with disarming conviction.

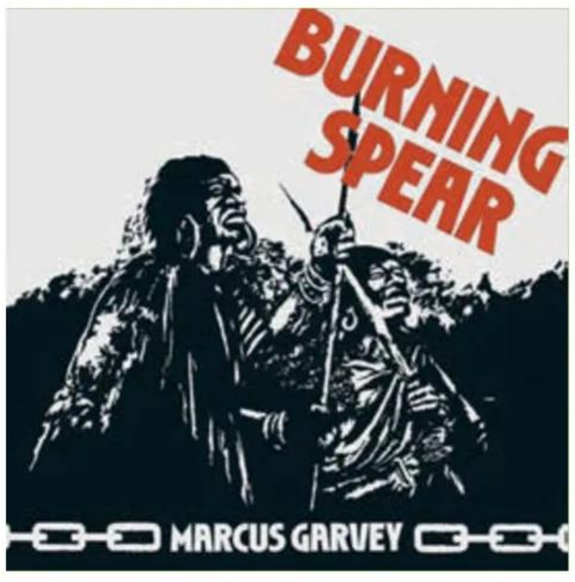


476 THE POLICE
REGGATTA DE BLANC
A&M, 1979

"White reggae", reckons the Franglais title. Misplaced modesty from Sting? You better believe it. Unleashing a pop force of the next 10 years, Sumner, Summers and Copeland present pop punk as fiery as it was resourceful and tuneful.

475 THE EAGLES
ONE OF THESE NIGHTS
ASYLUM, 1975

Soft-rock gold, which isn't afraid to experiment. If the songs occasionally flirt with denim-shirted cliché, the band can't quit with the weirdness and clever musical ideas. All this and world-weary but hopeful romanticism, too.



472 BURNING SPEAR
MARCUS GARVEY
ISLAND, 1975

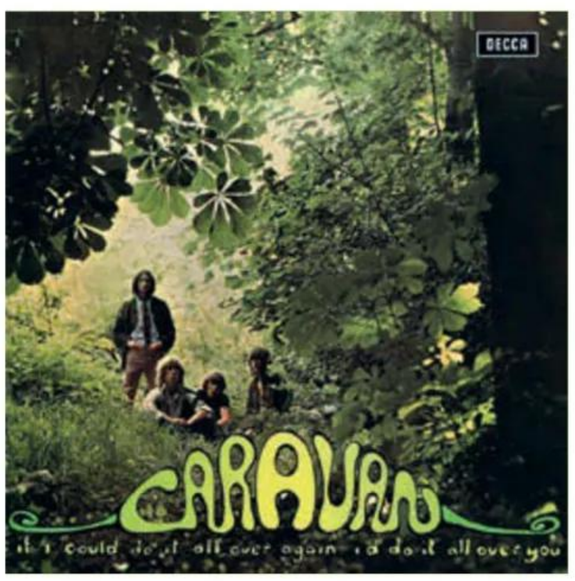
Reggae stalwart Winston Rodney's third album (his first for Island), named after and inspired by the Rastafarian political activist. Closely followed by a dub version, *Garvey's Ghost*.

471 ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO
LES STANCES A SOPHIE
PATHE, 1970

Funk meets free jazz? It can happen. This extraordinary film soundtrack backseats the AEOC's astringency for jubilant and delirious unison playing.

468 KATE & ANNA McGARRIGLE
KATE & ANNA McGARRIGLE
WARNERS, 1976

Sibling Canadian singer-songwriters' debut, where folk purism, wit and charm collided with Broadway-appropriate melodies and major-label production. The Anna-penned "Heart Like A Wheel" had already been a hit for Linda Ronstadt.



467 CARAVAN
IF I COULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN I'D DO IT ALL OVER YOU
DECCA, 1970

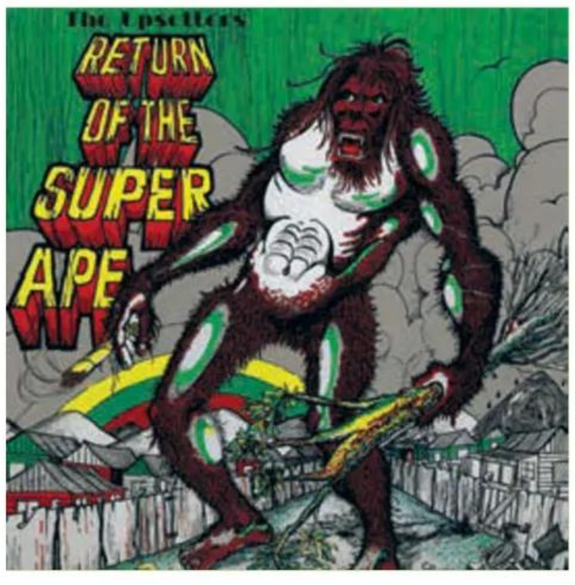
A Canterbury scene gem, exemplifying scene values: playfulness, digression and falsetto voices. Caravan hold bucolic reverie and the virtuosity of prog in a perfect balance - "With An Ear To The Ground You Can Make It" is simply beautiful.

464 THE ISLEY BROTHERS
THE HEAT IS ON
EPIC, 1975

Thirteen albums in and no sign of stopping, *The Heat Is On* is the Isleys getting low-slung and dirty, the title song a slurred, strung-out vision of soul-funk.

463 STEEL PULSE
HANDSWORTH REVOLUTION
ISLAND, 1978

A leg-up from Marley, and the rock-steady hand of producer Karl Pitterson, helped this Birmingham roots reggae crew find an audience for their lush urban reggae debut focused sharply on religion and politics – "Ku Klux Klan" was a pivotal, hard-hitting anti-racism anthem of the age.

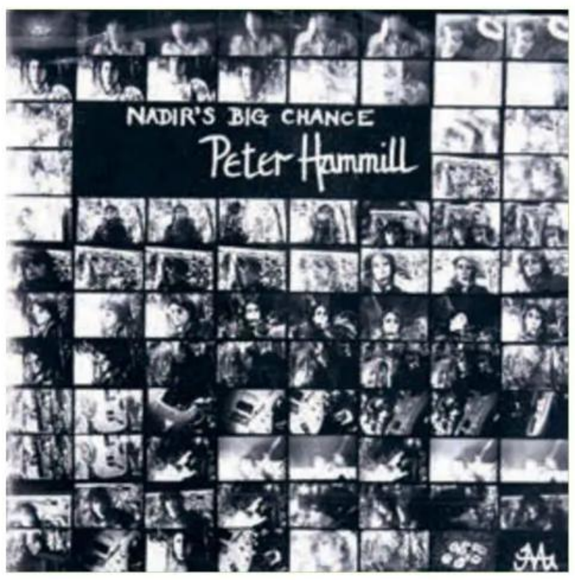


478 UPSETTERS
RETURN OF THE SUPER APE
LION OF JUDAH, 1978

Strong dub medicine, a sequel of a kind to 1976's *Super Ape*. Humid delights, and legendary for being the last record to emerge from the original Black Ark studio. Tunes, doomy pronouncements and very heavy sonic collage.

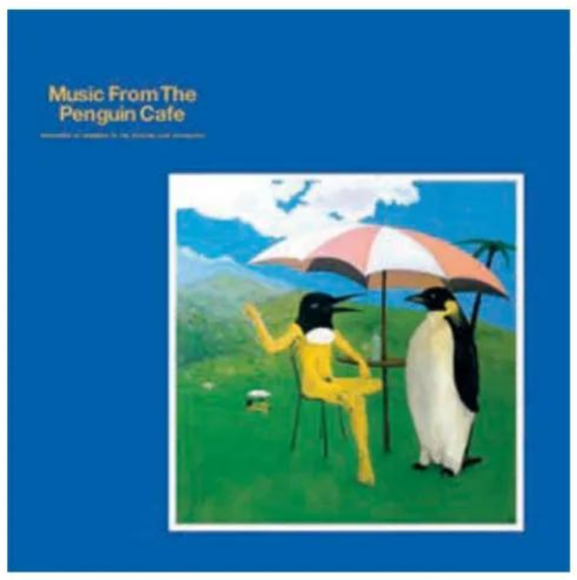
477 TUBEWAY ARMY
REPLICAS
BEGGARS BANQUET, 1979

Electronic music as a metaphor for alienation? Step right up. Second album from Gary Numan's group births "Are 'Friends' Electric?" and other more embryonic post-punk/electronic creations. All hail our new robot overlords!



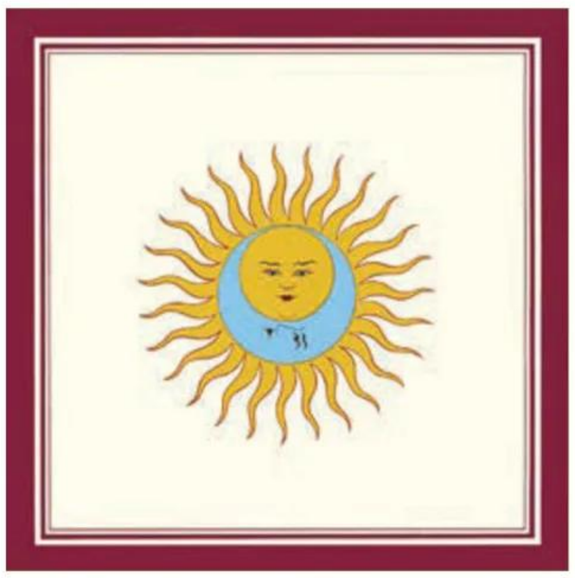
474 PETER HAMMILL
NADIR'S BIG CHANCE
CHARISMA, 1975

Hammill grabs hold of glam rock and doesn't let go, chanelling Eno-era Roxy Music, inventing the character Rikki Nadir and bringing Van Der Graaf Generator into the fold again. Johnny Rotten was listening, and so should we.



473 PENGUIN CAFÉ ORCHESTRA
MUSIC FROM THE PENGUIN CAFÉ
OBSCURE, 1976

If you can imagine King Crimson with all the violence replaced by rural calm, you almost have it. On Eno's label, Simon Jeffe's genre-defying minimalist troupe join the highly original dots between jazz, minimal and monocle.



470 KING CRIMSON
LARKS' TONGUES IN ASPIC
ISLAND, 1973

All change for Crimson! Out with Pete Sinfield. In with free percussionist Jamie Muir, violinist David Cross and singer/bassist John Wetton. Epic themes, weird sounds – later sampled without permission for the erotic movie *Emmanuelle*, weirdly enough.

469 KEITH JARRETT
THE KÖLN CONCERT
ECM, 1975

Playing on the wrong piano, after a bad couple of days on the road, somehow Jarrett pulled off a masterstroke here. A compelling blend of free thinking, jazz (and even occasionally schmaltz), it became the biggest-selling solo jazz album of all time

466 THE EAGLES
HOTEL CALIFORNIA
ASYLUM, 1976

The apogee of the band's achievement, as their bittersweet American dreaming inspires a small 'c' concept album. The world's imagination is comprehensively captured.

465 MC5
HIGH TIME
ATLANTIC, 1971

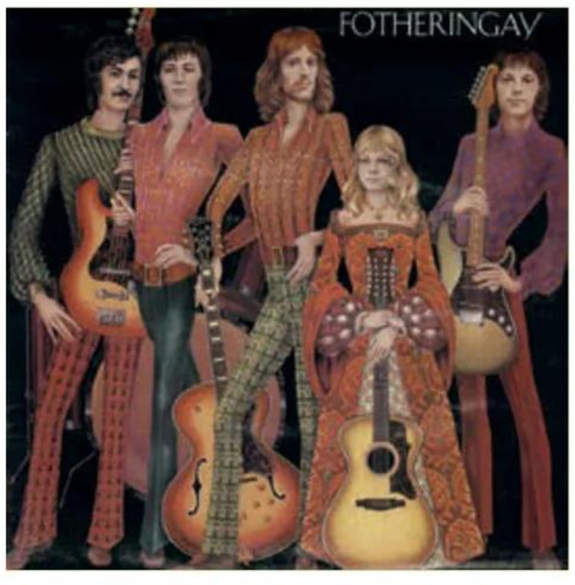
The band's definitive statement of free-jazz rock'n'roll. Issues were developing within the band, but on the record they were never better: "Skunk, Sonicly Speaking" is a magnificent meltdown.

462 MICHAEL CHAPMAN
FULLY QUALIFIED SURVIVOR
HARVEST, 1971

Here Chapman's singer-songwriter moves are buttressed by swooning strings, with David Bowie very much listening. Mick Ronson's stinging lead guitar beams from Hull via other worlds. Folk-rock was rarely this potent.

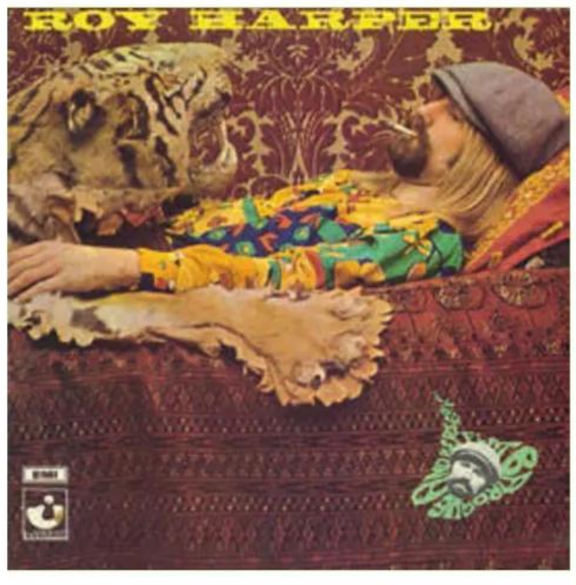
461 FUNKADELIC
FREE YOUR MIND... AND YOUR ASS WILL FOLLOW
WESTBOUND, 1970

Clinton's melting pop of soul, space rock and feedback, with subversive spiritual elements. The closing "Eulogy And Light" includes the Lords Prayer and Psalm 23.



460 FOTHERINGAY
FOTHERINGAY
ISLAND, 1970

Brit folk-rockers' only album. A first port of call – she writes five songs – for Sandy Denny after leaving Fairport Convention, in this outing with partner Trevor Lucas. "Banks Of The Nile" is a stone classic.



459 ROY HARPER
FLAT BAROQUE AND BERSERK
HARVEST, 1970

A singular British folk-rock talent makes his major-label debut. Jarringly outspoken as often as emotionally gut-punching.

456 FRIPP & ENO
EVENING STAR
ISLAND, 1975

A second collaboration that, if anything, bests its predecessor, Fripp working Eno's tape-loop systems to spiralling, psychedelic effect.

455 DEVO
DUTY NOW FOR THE FUTURE
WARNER BROS, 1979

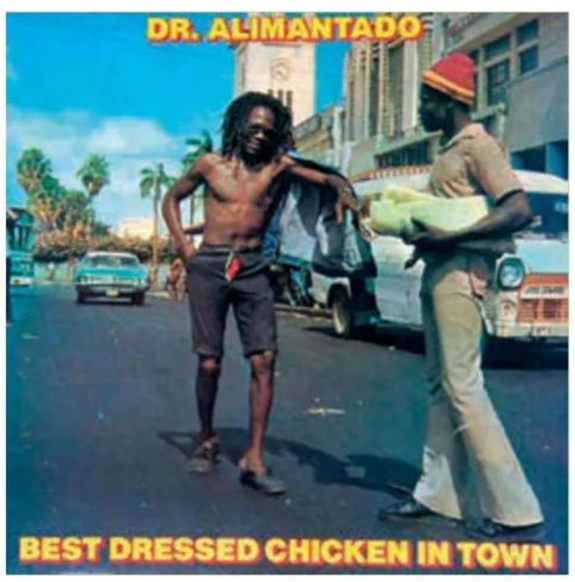
A spiky sonic palette opens up to produce a freshly warped synth-pop vision. Strong second album from the influential new wavers.

452 CHRIS McGREGOR'S BROTHERHOOD OF BREATH
CHRIS McGREGOR'S BROTHERHOOD OF BREATH
RCA NEON, 1971

South African jazz pianist and bandleader's debut album. Recorded in London with fellow jazz émigrés, this serves up vibrant, groovy big band playing.

451 MILLIE JACKSON
CAUGHT UP
SPRING, 1974

A soul concept album about a love triangle? Hell yes. Jackson plays both women as she emotes earthily around Muscle Shoals grooves.

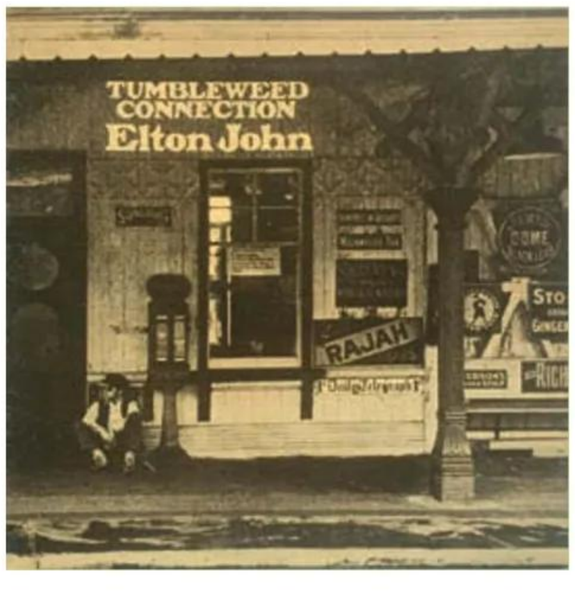


448 DR ALIMANTADO
BEST DRESSED CHICKEN IN TOWN
GREENSLEEVES, 1978

Lydon-endorsed Jamaican DJ arrives with reworked classic tunes, guest MCs (G Isaacs, H Andy) in tow, and a screw reassuringly loose.

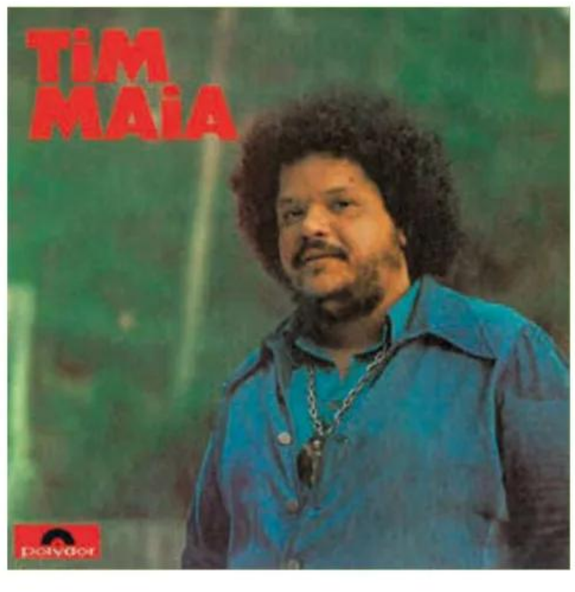
447 KEITH JARRETT
BELONGING
ECM, 1974

European bandmates help coax out a more joyful, gospel-infused Jarrett. Effortlessly inventive, expertly turned stuff.



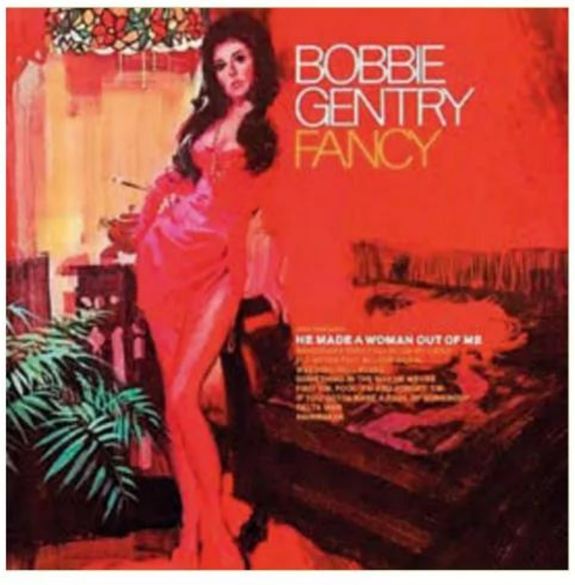
444 ELTON JOHN
TUMBLEWEED CONNECTION
DJM, 1970

Elton and Bernie's respect for American song gave rise to this – a sepia-tinted album with country-rock edges. The band are Stonesy and sympathetic, and the songs locate the artist's signature sentimental amid the traditional.



443 TIM MAIA
TIM MAIA
POLYDOR, 1973

A prolific but easygoing musician, Tim Maia walked it like he talked it. Never more so than on this 1973 album. Effortlessly blending tune, groove, Brazilian and European, the likes of "Compadre" sound like forgotten Stones classics, buddy movie themes for all time.



458 BOBBIE GENTRY
FANCY
CAPITOL, 1970

Largely a covers project (songs are by Nilsson, Leon Russell, James Taylor). Apart from the self-penned title track: about a woman pimping out her daughter in search of a sugar daddy.

457 FELA KUTI
EXPENSIVE SHIT
SOUNDWORKSHOP, 1975

Afrobeat pioneer's 12th album in just six years, the title track referencing defecating after ingesting a joint he alleged was planted on him by Nigerian police.

454 U-ROY
DREAD IN A BABYLON
TR INTERNATIONAL, 1975

A ranking reggae toaster foreshadows hip-hop. Where there's smoke (there's certainly a fair bit on the iconic cover) there's Rastafari.

453 JANE BIRKIN
DI DOO DAH
FONTANA, 1973

Intimate and playful, Birkin's solo debut feels like a Parisian counterpart to a Kevin Ayers album. Gainsbourg writes. Jean-Claude Vannier composes, to deliver strange, shifting guitar songs like "Kawasaki".

450 JOHN MARTYN
BLESS THE WEATHER
ISLAND, 1971

Martyn returns to solo work after two albums with wife Beverley. Includes the first examples of the "echoplex" tape-delay effect, prominent on future releases.

449 BILL FAY
BILL FAY
DERAM, 1970

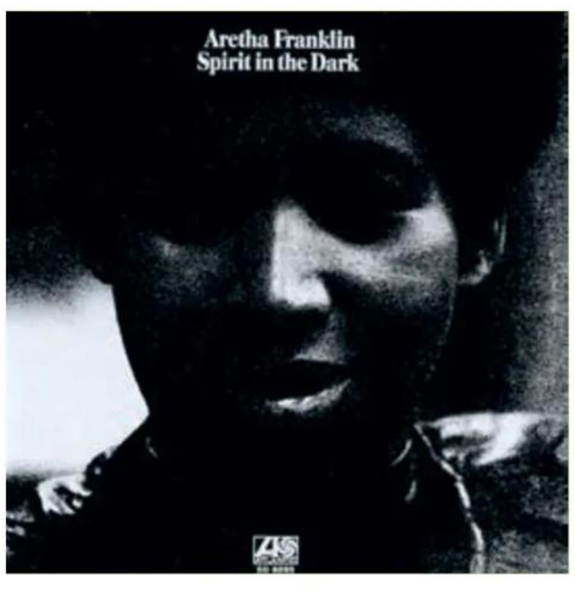
Dylanesque songsmithery tries on intriguing, faintly ritzy orchestral clothing. A slightly awkward fit: an ear-catching statement results.

446 KEVIN AYERS
BANANAMOUR
HARVEST, 1973

Ayers' eccentric, plummy journey continues. Lushly produced, the better to comment on fallen/falling contemporaries like Syd Barrett ("Oh! Wot A Dream") and Nico ("Decadence").

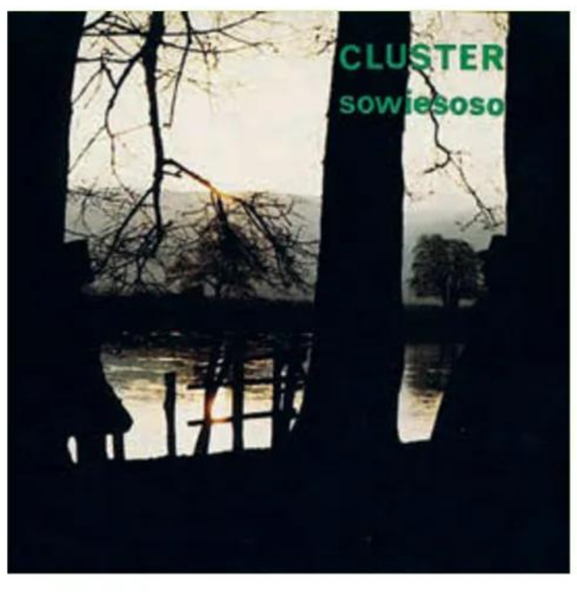
445 RANDY NEWMAN
12 SONGS
REPRISE, 1970

Dry, droll, Newman's penchant for satire and cutting commentary is bundled up here in a rootsy, small-scale sound. Every note counts, every word hits hard.



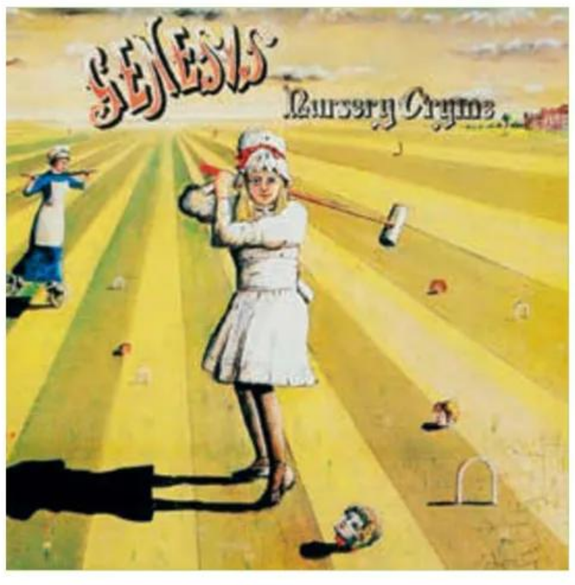
442 ARETHA FRANKLIN
SPIRIT IN THE DARK
ATLANTIC, 1970

"Don't Play That Song" was a big hit, but the album was her first for Atlantic to fall short of the US Top 20. Kanye West sampled the title track on "School Spirit".



441 CLUSTER
SOWIESOSO
SKY, 1976

While some German artists hit the road with motorik rhythms, Cluster avoided urban connection for bucolic spaces. An album of pastoral (if occasionally unsettling) synths and discreet melody, this was a synth revelation, to Eno, Bowie and more besides.



440 GENESIS
NURSERY CRYME
CHARISMA, 1971

With the arrival of Steve Hackett, the classic lineup coalesced – and the band pitched camp in a sinister Victoriana. "The Musical Box" grew in compositional stature, while the McCartneyesque "For Absent Friends" (written by Hackett and Collins) was the real surprise.

439 THE WALKER BROTHERS
NITE FLIGHTS
GTO, 1978

We say Walker Brothers, but it's Scott's electronic adventures that really command attention here. "The Electrician" in particular illustrates the post-*Low* soundscape Scott was now inhabiting. This way: the future.

436 CHEAP TRICK
IN COLOR
CBS, 1977

Huge riffs, bigger choruses – Cheap Trick played power pop with the emphasis on power. Amid the FM radio staples were surprising moments of gentle candour, which in their own way hit as hard.

435 LOU REED
CONEY ISLAND BABY
RCA, 1975

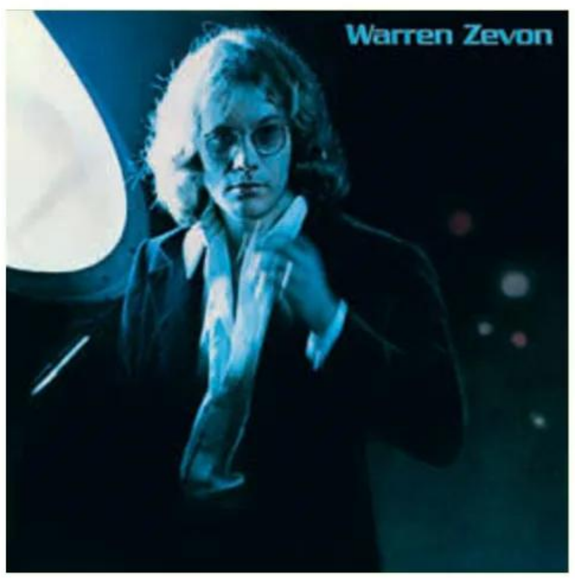
Some might have breathed a sigh of relief after *Metal Machine Music*. That would be to miss the odd mix of innocence and violence that characterises this follow-up, a subtler subversion. Doo-wop, New York and Velvets cuts all get in the mix.

432 GEORGE JONES
ALONE AGAIN
EPIC, 1976

Country music's most notorious boozer counts the cost on this ironically dry collection. Candid stock-taking takes preference over morbid self-pity in the song choices, while the clever novelty song "Her Name Is" supplied another country chart hit.

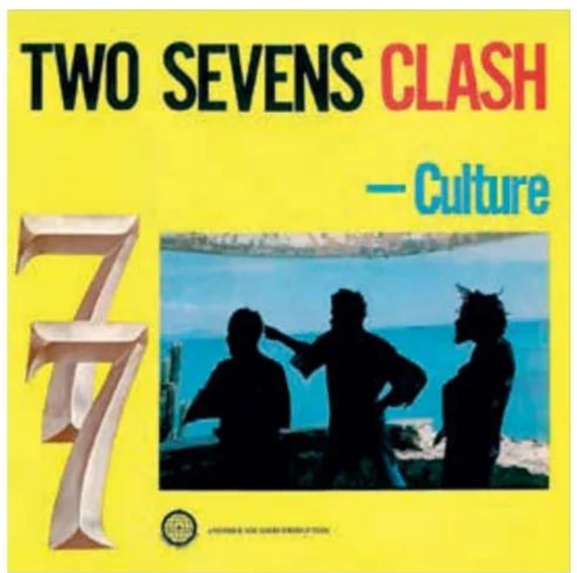
431 FACES
A NOD IS AS GOOD AS A WINK...
WARNER, 1971

This one's on them. Their debut was sprinkled with introspection; by their second, the Faces were all about the real good time, the songs staggering under their own unique logic. Kudos due as much to Ronnie Lane's domestic vignettes as Rod's rakish anthems.



428 WARREN ZEVON
WARREN ZEVON
ASYLUM, 1976

A decade's writing for hire had honed Zevon's tunes. Tender wisdom and a barbed wit make his major-label debut special.

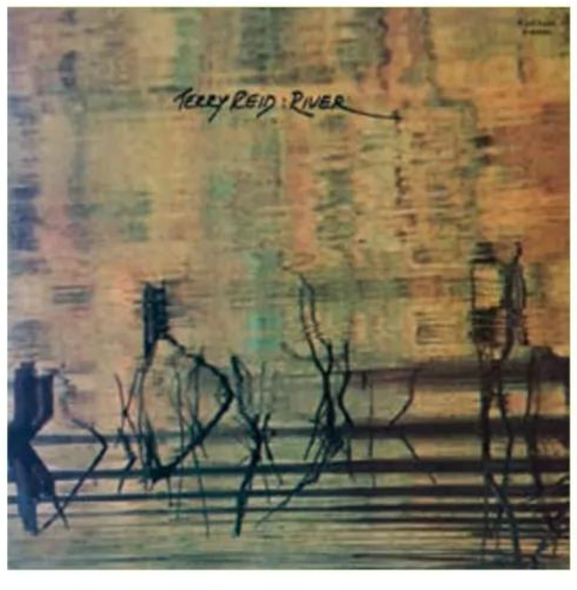


427 CULTURE
TWO SEVENS CLASH
JOE GIBBS, 1977

Apocalyptic Rasta prophecies spook out the punky reggae party, but when the world keeps turning, we carry on dancing.

424 ZZ TOP
TRES HOMBRES
LONDON, 1973

Better yet. No wonder *Tres Hombres* was their first big hit – every song's a winner. The sound's so tight and efficient it's almost clinical.



423 TERRY REID
RIVER
ATLANTIC, 1973

The man who could have worn Robert Plant's Zeppelin crown didn't want for his own glories. This third album, alongside Willie Bobo and David Lindley, is all about drift and warm grooves – like a version of Free co-piloted by David Crosby.

438 HARRY NILSSON
NILSSON SINGS NEWMAN
RCA, 1970

A short and exquisite record. Nilsson's voice is still undamaged by his lifestyle, and his sublime interpretations of Randy Newman's songs establish him as the Sinatra of the counterculture. "Love Story" may be the highpoint.

437 SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES
JOIN HANDS
POLYDOR, 1979

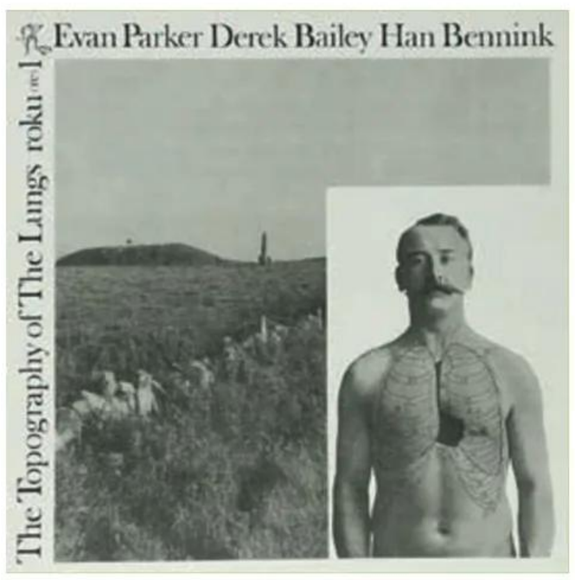
They lost their way a bit with this one – the side-long "Lord's Prayer" is pushing it – a sign that the first Banshees lineup was already fracturing. You still need it.

434 CAETANO VELOSO
CAETANO VELOSO
PHILIPS, 1971

Exiled in a less glamorous way than The Rolling Stones, here Caetano sounds homeless and roughed up by his experiences. Performed in English while billeted in London, the album is vulnerable, ill at ease – and completely compelling.

433 THE O'JAYS
BACK STABBERS
PHILADELPHIA INTERNATIONAL, 1972

It's all about the sly darkness of the title song, really. Still, there's plenty of other gems on this O'Jays album, their breakthrough soul/R&B collection.



430 EVAN PARKER/ DEREK BAILEY/ HAN BENNINK
THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE LUNGS
INCUS, 1970

Explosive scenes! The first release on the Bailey/Parker owned Incus label is a monster. Came with an accompanying manifesto about making truly new music but you'll listen and feel the trio's consideration, coiled power and sense of humour.

429 PAUL SIEBEL
WOODSMOKE AND ORANGES
ELEKTRA, 1970

Debut from Buffalo-born folk rocker with a country bent. Includes "Louise", later covered by both Linda Ronstadt and Bonnie Raitt.

426 SPIRIT
TWELVE DREAMS OF DR SARDONICUS
EPIC, 1970

Randy California's sleeper hit. Beyond psych, the band travel into sample-ready funky prog, with ecological credentials. Produced by David Briggs, best known for his work with Neil Young.

425 MARVIN GAYE
TROUBLE MAN
TAMLA, 1972

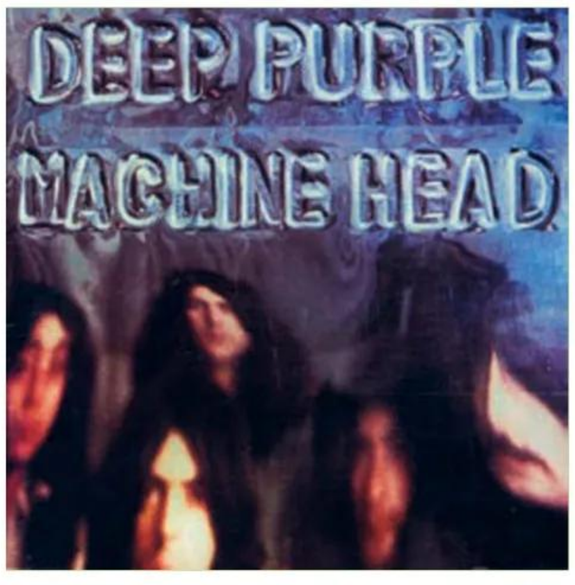
After *What's Goin' On*, Marvin stayed close to what was happening – this time with a film soundtrack. Reimagining himself as a kind a Motown Mingus, the album's themes and refrains are funky but not formulaic, hinting at melancholic depth.

422 JOHNNY PAYCHECK
SLIDE OFF YOUR SATIN SHEETS
EPIC, 1977

The follow-up *Take This Job And Shove It* banked the cheque that was written by ...*Satin Sheets*. Paycheck's persona as rough-around-the-edges lover not fighter was strongly stated here, enjoying the good times but wary of the morning after.

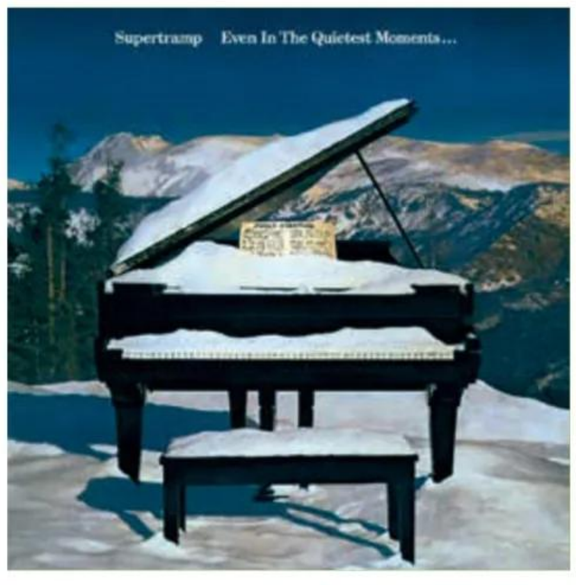
421 PRETENDERS
PRETENDERS
REAK, 1979

The most eagerly awaited – some said "hyped" – album of 1979. Delivering on the promise of their rapturously received gigs, long-time trier Chrissie Hynde presented gutsy new wave with a rock classicism and sultry delivery.



420 DEEP PURPLE
MACHINE HEAD
HARVEST, 1972

The classic Purple MKII album, recorded in a Montreux hotel in enforced circumstances, per "Smoke On The Water". The denim ordinaire is fully outweighed by the wildness supplied by Ritchie Blackmore and Ian Paice.

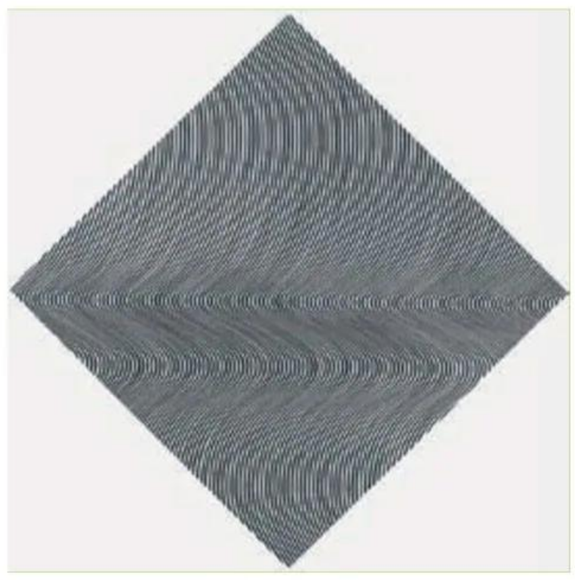


419 SUPERTRAMP
EVEN IN THE QUIETEST MOMENTS...
A&M, 1977

Jaunty lead single "Give A Little Bit" became a US hit and movie soundtrack mainstay, but its parent album was a far more measured and melancholic affair. Supertramp's most reflective moment.

416 TELEVISION
ADVENTURE
ELEKTRA, 1978

Filing off the rougher edges, Television's second took a janglier, more reflective approach to NYC art-pop, revealing a rich pastoral undercurrent. "The Fire" seems to inhabit the frosted instrumentation of Mercury Rev; "The Dream's Dream" opens up new horizons.

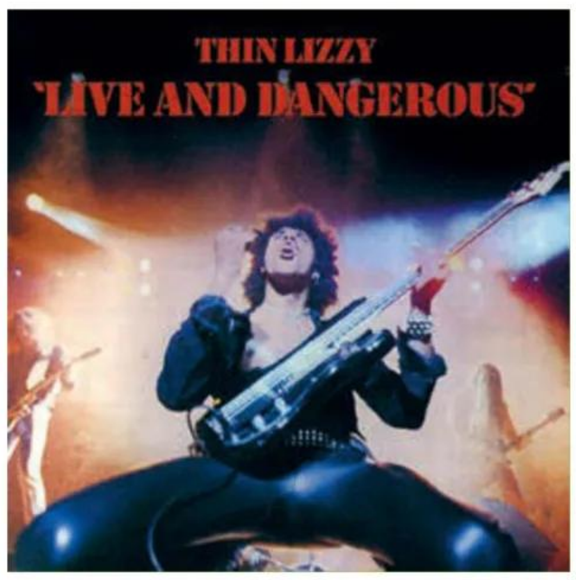


415 FAUST
THE FAUST TAPES
VIRGIN, 1973

A budget-priced showcase turns a generation to face the strange. Odd collages, archival jams, live excerpts, assembled to form a rewarding intriguing and pretty much unique work. All for 99p!

412 TOM WAITS
NIGHTHAWKS AT THE DINER
ASYLUM, 1975

"Live" in the studio, this is the early Waits schtick in full effect. Great jokes, smoking jazz, the album served notice that while songs were your way in, they granted your admission to an alternate universe that seemed to bear no relation to the 1970s.

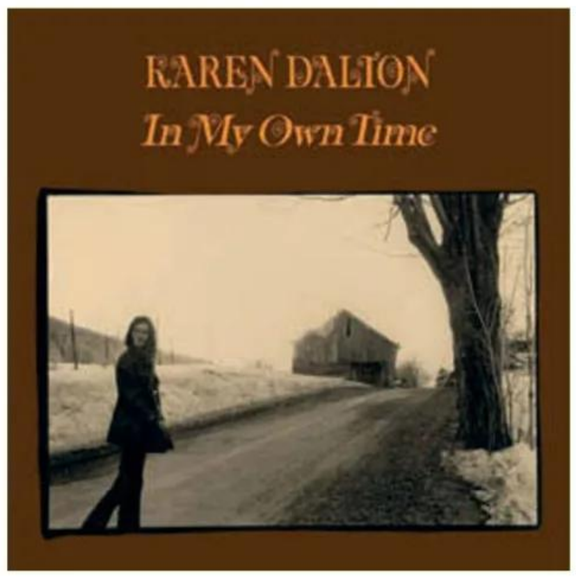


411 THIN LIZZY
LIVE AND DANGEROUS
VERTIGO, 1978

The Irish quartet, about as powerful as it got – a more sleazy Motörhead, perhaps. Phil Lynott provides the lad-about-town charisma while the twin guitars of Brian Robertson and Scott Gorham roam hellaciously across rockified and vaguely Celtic themes.

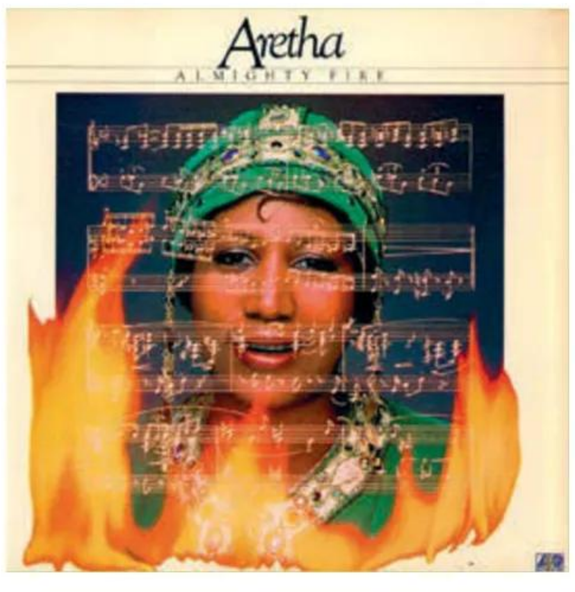
408 THE KINKS
LOLA VERSUS POWERMAN AND THE MONEYGOROUND, PART ONE
PYE, 1970

Spawned hit singles in "Lola" and "Apeman", but the majority of the album is a satire of the music biz ("Denmark Street", "Top Of The Pops").



407 KAREN DALTON
IN MY OWN TIME
PARAMOUNT, 1971

One of US folk's great vocal interpreters spreads her stylistic wings. At heart, she still retains a raw-throated, emotive allure.

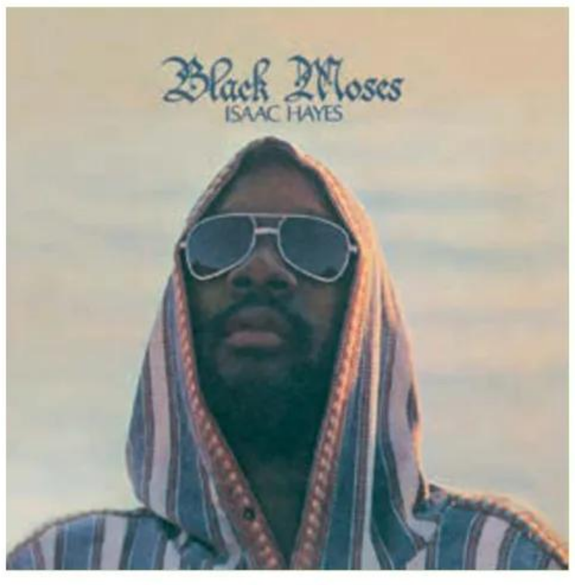


404 ARETHA FRANKLIN
ALMIGHTY FIRE
ATLANTIC, 1971

Reunited with Curtis Mayfield for the first time since *Sparkle* a couple of years earlier, the mood of *Almighty Fire* shifts between funk, uneasy feminist disco and a revisit to something like the classic soul of her late-1960s prime.

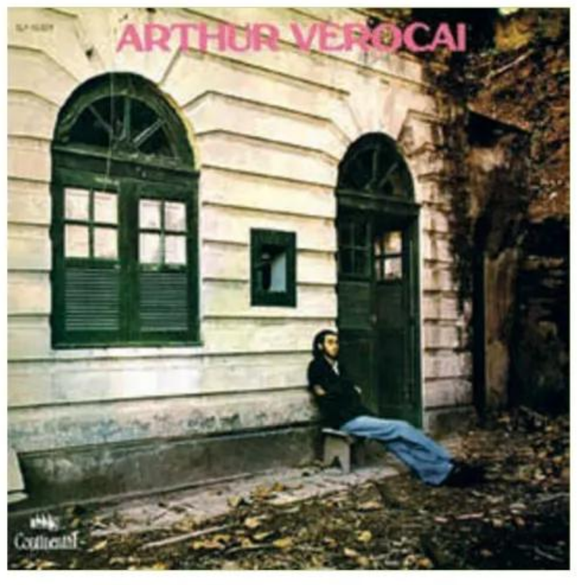
403 WAR
ALL DAY MUSIC
UNITED ARTISTS, 1971

Sedate and understated grooves from the former associates of Eric Burdon. The gently unfolding guitar and occasional CSNY-style vocal harmonies are the bedrock of this grower.



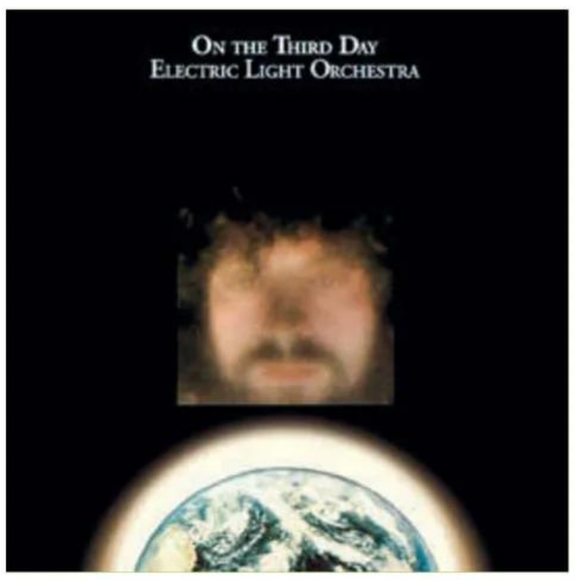
418 ISAAC HAYES
BLACK MOSES
STAX, 1971

Epic and personal, Isaac Hayes' follow-up to *Shaft* fully repaid the promise of its massive fold-out cruciform cover. Broaching songs from Curtis Mayfield, Bacharach/David and Gamble/Huff, Ike transports them elsewhere at his luxurious and stately pace.



417 ARTHUR VEROCAI
ARTHUR VEROCAI
CONTINENTAL, 1972

A buried treasure – possibly more so than its composer would have liked. Receiving little love for this swooning and funky set of Brazilian grooves, Verocai retreated into making music for adverts, which feels as if it was our loss.



414 ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA
ON THE THIRD DAY
WARNER, 1973

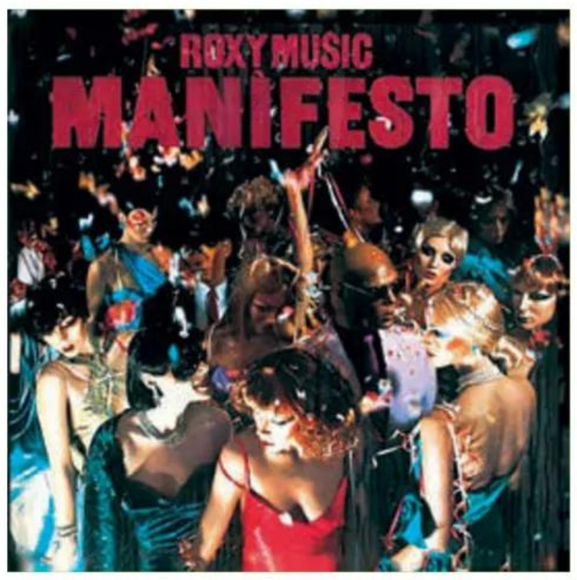
With ELO now including Mik Kaminski's strings, Jeff Lynne had another impressive colour to add to his symphonic inhabitation of the spirit of The Beatles circa *Abbey Road*. "Showdown" turned "Heard It Through The Grapevine" into a funky disco number.

413 CLUSTER & BRIAN ENO
OLD LAND
SKY, 1977

Never a joiner, Eno was still moved to get further involved with Cluster – almost to the point of running the show. A lovely chiming ambience predominates here, the better to foreground the organic sounds of piano and gentle, unhurried rhythms.

410 THE STRAWBS
HERO AND HEROINE
A&M, 1974

Founders Dave Cousins and Dave Lambert enlist new players for an exercise in folk prog with Gothic overtones. Check the doom-laden title track!



409 ROXY MUSIC
MANIFESTO
ISLAND, 1979

Back after a break, Roxy Music take on the challenge of punk and post-punk by going more refined, more pop-savvy – but with a strange, disconnected, almost disjointed pop. This is a weird one.

406 BILL WITHERS
+JUSTMENTS
SUSSEX, 1974

Bill hits the electric piano on this often tight and funky set, his vocal capable of a grainy political soul as much his more wistful and reflective mode. "The Same Love That Made Me Laugh" showed that Bill hadn't strayed too far from his base.

405 DOLLY PARTON
COAT OF MANY COLORS
RCA VICTOR, 1971

Before she adopted her bulletproof persona, Dolly showed a vulnerable side. On this set of folky, sharp and generally self-composed tunes, she showcases her wit, pace and family-first agenda.

402 IAN HUNTER
YOU'RE NEVER ALONE WITH A SCHIZOPHRENIC
CHRYSALIS, 1979

A mighty long way down rock'n'roll in this frequently magnificent solo session in the company of (several musicians from) The E Street Band. High spirits predominate, while Mick Ronson keeps a musicianly hand on the tiller.

401 PHAROAH SANDERS
THEMBI
IMPULSE!, 1971

A more diverse affair than *Black Unity*, running a range of styles without ever overindulging or letting our ears wander.

“We were ruling the world!”

JOESTEVENS

Between 1970 and 1974, former Beatles engineer KEN SCOTT made the leap to producer, working on Bowie’s iconic glam albums and shepherding classics from Lennon, Elton, Lou Reed and Supertramp, among many others. He talks *MARK BEAUMONT* through an age of limitless budgets, unrestrained creativity and global takeovers...

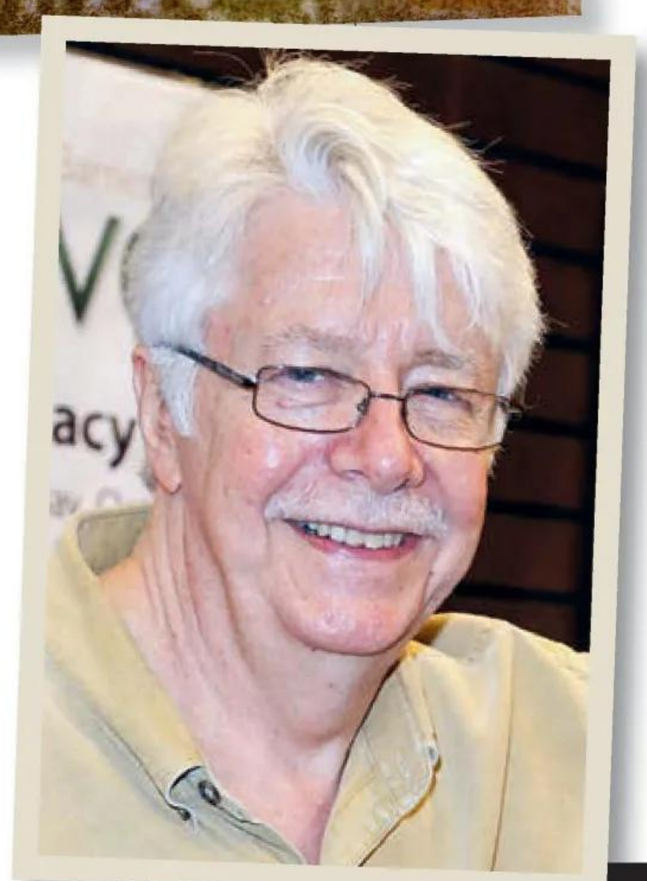
HOW much had the processes of making albums changed over the late ’60s? “When I first started at EMI in ’64 as an assistant engineer, when you weren’t actually on sessions what they’d have you do is something called ‘banding’. They would be receiving tape copies of the American albums they were going to release and we had to put exactly five seconds of leader in-between each track on the album. No matter how the music felt, it was always five

seconds of record noise before the next track started. For a lot of us that became a pain, because music is supposed to affect you and sometimes you want something to come in quickly and sometimes it'll move you and you need to take a little breather and then have the next track starting. That's what affected a lot of us, we wanted to manipulate the tracks a little more. That started with The Beatles, they enabled all of us to do it. They felt the same kind of way and started to make a side that moved you more, it wasn't as static as it had been before."

How did things shift as the '70s arrived? "The new technology was just more tracks – we moved from four-track to eight-track, then to 16, then 24, then we were linking up two 24-track machines and eventually digital came into it, giving us as many goddamn tracks as we want! When we started on four-track in '64 or '65, thinking of The Beatles, you'd record all the rhythm section on one track then another track would be backing vocals, one would be lead vocal then the other one would be lead guitar and tambourine. We could split it up when we moved to eight-track, then you could have bass and drums each on their own track, doing it like that. The more tracks we had, the better it made the stereo mixes. When you've only got four tracks, you put the rhythm section on one side and the vocals on the other side and you can't be very inventive with it. The more tracks you have, and each individual instrument being on its own, you can place it and play with it a lot more. The move to stereo was really enhanced by having the ability to separate the instruments a bit more."

Gimme your hands: Ken Scott (left) with David Bowie and Mick Ronson working on *Pin-Ups*, summer 1973

Scott with Billy Cobham at Trident Studios in London's Soho, mixing his *Spectrum* LP, 1973



Supertramp once claimed you were something of a perfectionist when it came to working on the possibilities of stereo... "We were out to make the perfect record, so a certain amount of that is to do with the stereo, how you spread things, how you place things in that sort of arena, being able to get depth on things even just with the two speakers, it was that kind of thing for me. Giving the perception of front-to-back as opposed to side-to-side was always a thing for me, it still is today. With surround sound it's much easier to do."

Did the besuited studio boffins give way to the artist as producer? "Absolutely. Early '60s to mid-'60s, the producer's role was more sorting out arrangements with the act, the songs they'd record, that sort of thing. The sound was totally down to the engineer – the producer really had nothing to say about the sound – and then you had the artist, who had no say about anything. Then you had The Beatles – as they became more popular they were allowed up into the control room, so they could actually hear it the way everyone in the control room was hearing it. Slowly but surely they'd go, 'Oh, can we just push this bit up here?' and they'd reach over and just push up one fader. After one fader, then it became two, and they started to have more say, their ideas were working, so it was difficult to say no to them. Eventually they knew how to do everything, almost. Plus, in the early '70s, it moved into the engineer-producer side. Most of the producers before had come from more of a musical or music-publishing background, because it was all down to songs and arrangements. Suddenly, when the technical side of things started to become more important, we as engineers started to take on more control of the musicality of it as well, and that's when the engineer-producer started to come in, like Glyn Johns, Roy Thomas Baker and myself."

Your career as an engineer-producer developed hand-in-hand with Bowie's breakthrough albums during this period, how did you find that? "I loved it. It was frightening, *Hunky Dory* being the first thing I ever had a production say in. It was scary for both David and I; neither of us had really produced before, so we were finding our own footing. As our ideas started to work, it gave us even more freedom and boosted our confidence, and it finished up being great. There are only two people involved rather than the three – being both producer and engineer you can get exactly what you're after. There's no: 'Can we try it this way?', 'No, that's not gonna work', 'Well, let's just try'. You're having the arguments within your own head if it's gonna work or not. With David saying what he wanted, in much the same way The Beatles said to George Martin, 'We want it something like this,' and George knew how to get it that way, so it was with David and I."

> "*Hunky Dory* was scary for both David and I; neither of us had really produced before"

Was Lennon still pushing the boundaries on *Imagine*? "In certain respects, yeah. Within the whole setup, Paul was the one that investigated things much more than John. He'd go out and listen to some of the more obscure types of music, whereas John wouldn't. But then Paul would come back and talk about it to John and Paul would never move that into the studio, whereas John would take what Paul had told him and bring it into the studio and experiment to get something different. After the breakup, I don't think John, musically, had so much of the avant-garde influence of Paul to bring up the experimentation more."

You worked on several George Harrison records incorporating his Eastern

DICK BARNATT/REDFERNS; CHELSEA LAUREN/WIREIMAGE

influences – were music's horizons broadening? "I can only speak for English artists of that period, but they were breaking big throughout the world. Up until The Beatles you could be huge in England, you might have a certain amount of success in Europe and Australia, but you'd never break America or Japan or anything. Suddenly the big artists from England were breaking big throughout the world, so they started to go to places that they'd never go to before and meet people they'd never have met. The thought of a rock-and-roller hanging out with Ravi Shankar before George did – no-one would ever conceive of that. Their minds were expanding because their careers were expanding and taking them to places they'd never gone to before. I can't imagine Cliff Richard hanging out with Ravi Shankar. Cliff – huge here, means absolutely nothing in the States. His career didn't break out the way some of the later ones did."

Was money no object? "Let's put it this way, for a lot of my records at that point I wasn't even given a budget. We just did what had to be done. With The Beatles, obviously no-one bothered about budget with them because they knew they'd make it back. With David, *Hunky Dory* and *Ziggy*... were both paid for by his management company and they hardly ever came down – the only one that came down to the studio was Mr Defries, and he would only come in for five minutes. We just did what we wanted to do and got on with it. We went through that with Supertramp on *Crime Of The Century* – going out on a limb to get as close to perfection as we could, while everyone expected the album to be recorded in two weeks. But by then we'd only got basic tracks down, maybe rough vocals. Suddenly we're told that Jerry Moss, the M of A&M, was in town and wanted to come and hear, and we fought that because we didn't have enough to play him. But he came down and listened and we heard back the next day that he loved what he heard and we had as much time and as much money as we needed. I still don't know how much the album cost to record."

So it was a period of ultimate creative freedom? "Oh yes, absolutely. It was an amazing period. The artists got their hands on the desk but there was a mutual respect, there was no-one trying to show up anyone else. We were all working as a collective, all aiming for the best thing we could come up with and something we would enjoy. We were making records for ourselves."

Did albums get more epic, ambitious and self-indulgent? "I'll say one thing – Rick Wakeman."

How did you feel about the influx of double and concept albums in the era? "The more the merrier. As long as there's not lots of filler. I remember that first Chicago double album, which was 75 per cent amazing, but then there was that one track, all it was was feedback. That's just insanity, that to me is filler. I don't like filler."

The era also saw soft rock come into its own – how was it working with Elton? "Fun. He'd write the song, we'd work out the arrangements, record the basic track, put the vocals on and then we wouldn't see him. He'd leave it up to Gus [*Dudgeon, producer*] and the band to put it together. By the time I became involved with Elton he was already big, then we changed the style from the big orchestral thing, which is what he was known for, to the more soft-rock thing, and that's when he really took off even more. There was already the aura of success around him."

What was Lou Reed's approach on *Transformer*? "I don't think Lou had an approach! He was there physically but there was no way he was anywhere close mentally. For me it was a David Bowie record without him doing the vocals, pretty much. It was very much David, Ronno [*Mick Ronson*] and I. Lou would teach Ronno the song and then Ronno would teach the musicians the song, work out the arrangement and we'd record it, very much the same way we just did with David's records. David knew the material that was going to be recorded, he'd gone through it with Lou, he knew basically how he wanted it to sound, it was just putting it all together. He obviously had total faith in me, because once we'd finished recording he was on a boat to America, the *QE2* I think it was, and I was left to mix it and put it all together."

Watch those men: Lulu with Lou Reed, Mick Jagger and Bowie at London's Café Royal after the "Ziggy retirement" show, July 4, 1973

Did it feel as though you were in the age of the dinosaurs? "No, not at all. We were ruling the world! As far as England was concerned it started to fade a little, which was why in '76 I moved to LA. There seemed to be more happening there than there was here. From the early '60s through to about '74, London was the centre of the universe, from fashion to music, everything. It was more enjoyable in LA – of course there was the obvious factor of fun in the sun, which made it feel good for a while, but England, politically, and the general feel of the public at that point, was really down, which then led to punk. We were all moving over there because we were fed up with what was happening here, but continuing what we were doing in a different country, whereas over here, because of the general change in the atmosphere, a whole new genre of music came out. But we had nothing to do with that, we'd moved on." ●

Ken Scott's *Abbey Road To Ziggy Stardust* is published by Alfred Books

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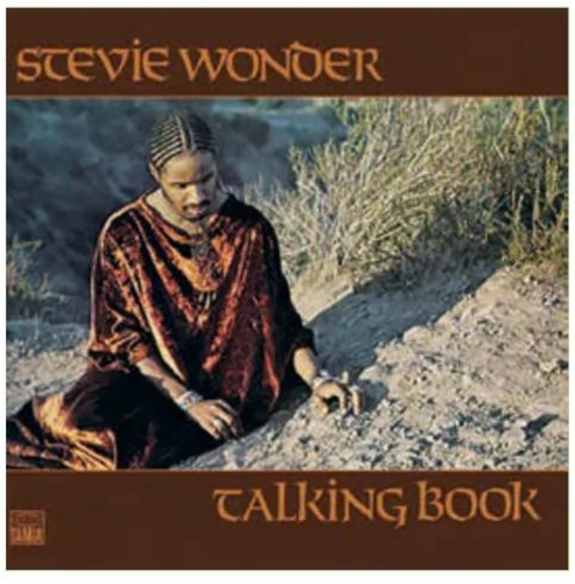


400 STEVIE WONDER
TALKING BOOK
TAMLA, 1972

A transformative 15th album, as young Stevie drifts free from the guidance of Berry Gordy and develops an experimental direction and socio-political voice of his own. "Superstition" and "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life" mark the coming of age.

399 ROBERT PALMER
SNEAKIN' SALLY THROUGH THE ALLEY
ISLAND, 1874

A confident soul-funk solo debut from the ex-Vinegar Joe singer, backed by The Meters, Little Feat's Lowell George and Steve Winwood, among others. Palmer tackles Allen Toussaint's title track with harmonica-doused panache.

396 TOM WAITS
CLOSING TIME
ASYLUM, 1973

Out of the Troubadour staggers a new – yet very old – voice in folk-inflected blues and jazz. Despondence and escapism share time on his grizzled tongue, while covers by the Eagles, Tim Buckley and Bette Midler would make a cult of this downbeat debut.

395 MIKE WESTBROOK ORCHESTRA
CITADEL/ROOM 315
RCA, 1975

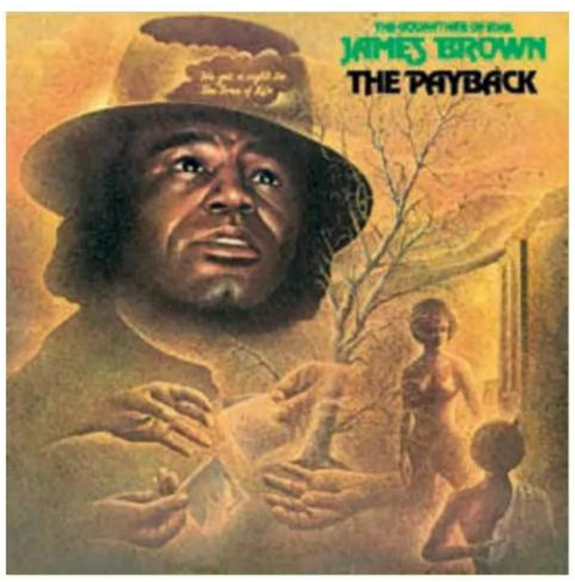
Key British jazz band leader and Ronnie Scott's resident Westbrook began composing pieces for larger concert groups in the early 1970s. *Citadel/Room 315*, featuring saxophonist John Surman, is his powerful second.

392 PUBLIC IMAGE
FIRST ISSUE
VIRGIN, 1978

In the wake of the Pistols' demise, Lydon's no longer Rotten. Jah Wobble's malevolent bass rumble and the lacerating guitar of Keith Levene – alongside Lydon's trademark wails on their definitive track "Public Image" – lend post-punk an equally distinctive character.

391 LINDA PERHACS
PARALLELOGRAMS
KAPP, 1970

The sole 1970s album from dental hygienist Perhacs – she went back to her day job when it flopped – grew a cult following over decades. Wistful, gossamer-soft folk vignettes on the face of it. Delve deeper: giddy, slightly psychedelic visions emerge.



388 JAMES BROWN
THE PAYBACK
POLYDOR, 1973

Rejected as the soundtrack to Larry Cohen's blaxploitation movie *Hell Up In Harlem* – because, possibly apocryphally, the record wasn't deemed funky enough – Brown's 37th album would nonetheless become a landmark of the genre.

387 LEONARD COHEN
SONGS OF LOVE AND HATE
COLUMBIA, 1971

Mordant as ever, with his baleful humour, on his third album Cohen sealed the deal. The songs are expansive, the lyrics inspired – witness Joan Of Arc marrying the flames that consume her – and the production always spare and focused.

384 DONNA SUMMER
LOVE TO LOVE YOU BABY
CASABLANCA/OASIS, 1975

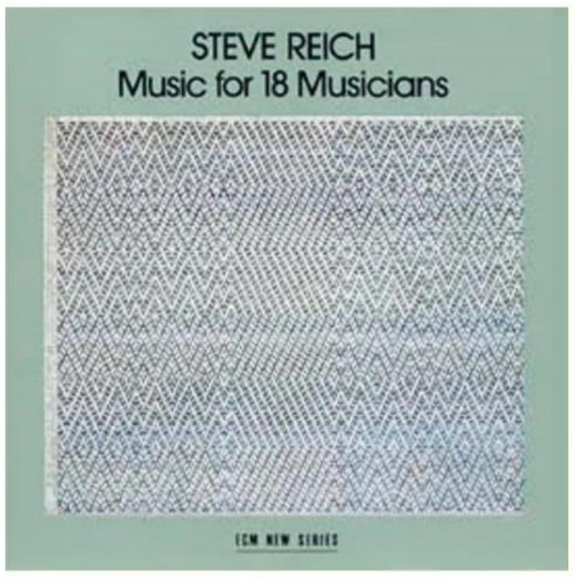
Juxtaposing the disco erotica of the 17-minute title track, taking up all of side one, with the soul balladry and R&B rag-bag on side two, Summer's second album arguably set the formula for the extended mix EPs to follow.

383 HAWKWIND
IN SEARCH OF SPACE
UNITED ARTISTS, 1971

Finding their identity with a groovy Barney Bubbles sleeve (and science fiction logbook), the Ladbroke Grove hippies set out for the unknown universe. "Master Of The Universe" is the hit, but Nik Turner's deranging "You Shouldn't Do That" was the real trip.

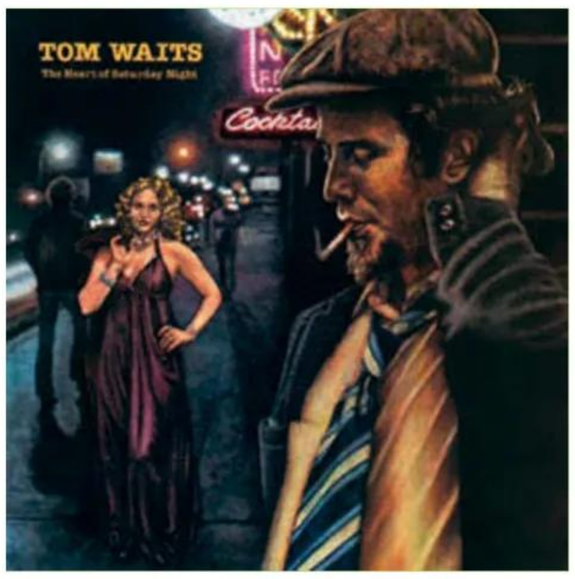
398 TOM WAITS
SMALL CHANGE
ASYLUM, 1976

A bar-floor bard continues to hone his act over woozy jazz – recorded 1950s style, orchestra by his side – as the room spins queasily around him. Alcoholism and pessimism abound in a cityscape of drunks, losers and night-walkers that cemented Waits' reputation.



397 STEVE REICH
MUSIC FOR 18 MUSICIANS
ECM, 1978

The Town Hall, New York City, 1976: an avant-garde classical adventurer gathers a crack squad together, Reich's first attempt at writing for larger ensembles – 18 is the minimum number of musicians needed. A hypnotic, minimalist masterpiece results.



394 TOM WAITS
THE HEART OF SATURDAY NIGHT
ASYLUM, 1974

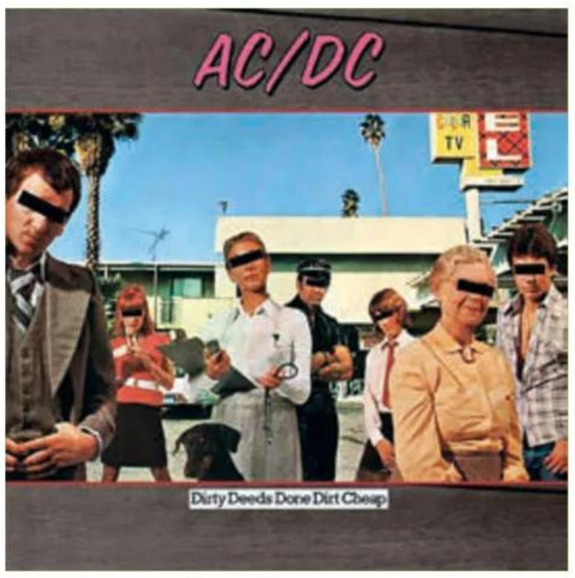
Another step down the line for Waits, his Beat poetics are emboldened on a second album written in tribute to Jack Kerouac. The songs are stronger, his voice more assured, it's all deceptively gorgeous.

393 THE HEADHUNTERS
SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST
ARISTA, 1975

A space-funk vibe-out with the Headhunters sans Herbie Hancock – the debut of the quintet band. The Pointer Sisters guest on the towering opener "God Make Me Funky", bringing it all home.

390 LA MONTE YOUNG AND MARIAN ZAZEELA
DREAM HOUSE 78' 17"
SHANDAR, 1974

Rooted in the pair's Dream House project of continuous music, and predating AI music by decades, minimalist composer Young and artist Zazeela took the lead for this art piece from sine-wave generators, either playing along with them or letting them loose on their own.



389 AC/DC
DIRTY DEEDS DONE DIRT CHEAP
ALBERT/ATLANTIC, 1976

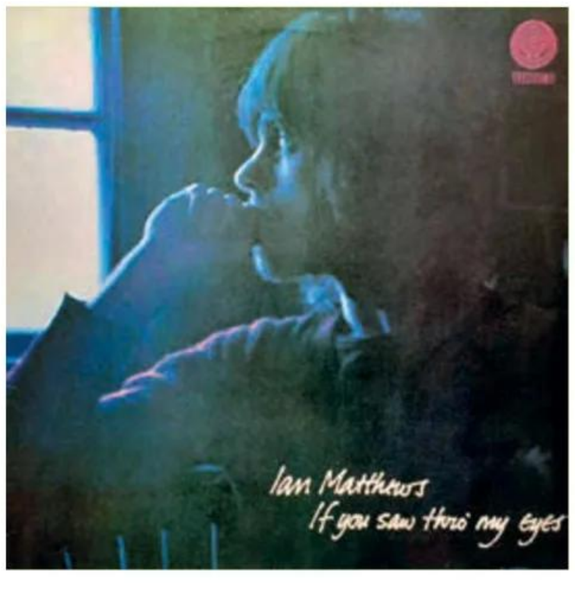
Originally intended as an album of Bogartian mystery scenarios (although, lyrically, "Big Balls" is hardly *The Maltese Falcon*), AC/DC's third record sired a signature hit in the title track. Cemented their reputation as bawdy and nefarious rock'n'roll insurrectionists.

386 JERRY JEFF WALKER
RIDIN' HIGH
MCA, 1975

Greenwich Village regular and "Mr Bojangles" author Walker was resident of Austin, Texas and helping pioneer the outlaw country movement by the time of this loose and rowdy drunk'n'roll favourite.

385 BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS
NATTY DREAD
ISLAND, 197Z4

Boasting Trenchtown tribute "No Woman, No Cry", Marley's socially and spiritually charged first album without Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer was a breakthrough release, helping to popularise reggae in the US and UK.

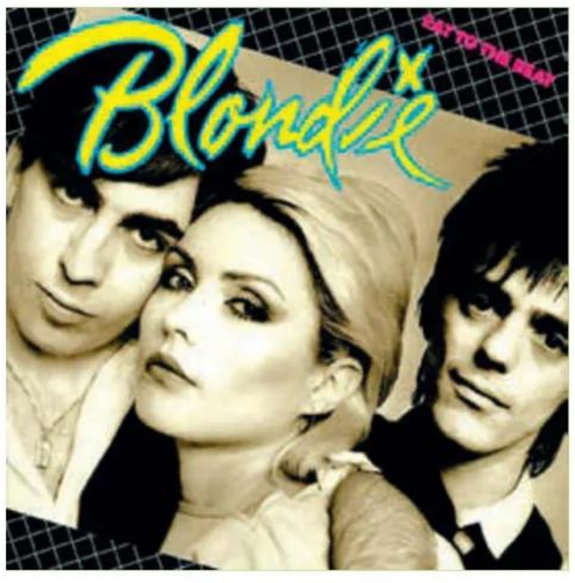


382 IAN MATTHEWS
IF YOU SAW THRO' MY EYES
VERTIGO, 1971

A Vertigo debut finds the former Fairport Convention man on a country folk tip, with help from old bandmates Sandy Denny and Richard Thompson. Jazz pianist Keith Tippett also guests on one of the finest post-Fairport releases.

381 X-RAY SPEX
GERMFREE ADOLESCENTS
EMI, 1978

Plundering their previously released hit singles – notably the title track and "The Day The World Turned Dayglo" – a brace-toothed punk wunderkind and her band grab the world by the lapels. Even John Lydon is freaked out.

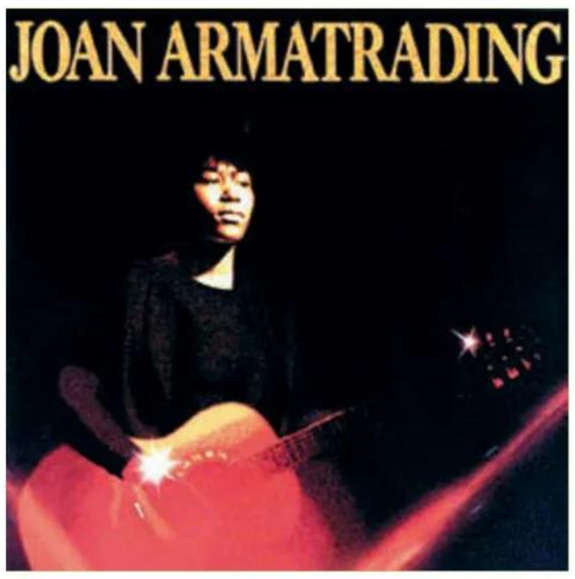


380 BLONDIE
EAT TO THE BEAT
CHRYSALIS, 1979

Capitalising on the success of *Parallel Lines*, the New York new wavers push further into disco, reggae and funk on the follow-up, home to such poised pop beauties as "Dreaming", "Union City Blue" and "Atomic".

379 KING CRIMSON
RED
ISLAND, 1974

A heavy record, and featuring much improvisation in the shape of "Providence", but still a tuneful, accessible album. Crimson slims down for a definitive release – before Robert Fripp disbands the group for the rest of the decade.



376 JOAN ARMATRADING
JOAN ARMATRADING
A&M, 1976

Armatrading's breakthrough third benefits from textural assistance from members of the Faces, Fairport and Gallagher & Lyle, adding heft to the folk pop of which "Love And Affection" would prove an enduring example.

375 JOHN MARTYN
INSIDE OUT
ISLAND, 1973

Considered Martyn's most experimental and jazz-steeped album of the era – "Outside In" and "Look In" developed into roaming behemoths live – *Inside Out* featured appearances from Traffic's Steve Winwood and Chris Wood as well as Martyn's celebrated Echoplex.

372 HARMONIA
DELUXE
BRAIN, 1975

Pulsing, chiming, formative pop-electronica from Cluster with Neu!'s Michael Rother. Recorded out in Forst, Germany, and produced by the legendary Conny Plank, *Deluxe* has a deeply felt pastoral heart.

371 PENTANGLE
CRUEL SISTER
TRANSATLANTIC, 1970

On traditional tales of Arctic expeditions and knightly rivalries, the jazz tinges soften and folk roots beckon. That doesn't stop them embarking on a meandering 18-minute take on "Jack Orion", previously available in a succinct version by Bert Jansch.

368 NANCY SINATRA & LEE HAZLEWOOD
NANCY & LEE AGAIN
RCA VICTOR, 1972

Four years later, a dislocated but classic pairing reunites for a mood-shifting second together, heavy on the orchestrations, melodrama and semi-comic larks. The highly strung cover of Dolly Parton's "Down From Dover" of particular note.

367 MARVIN GAYE
LET'S GET IT ON
TAMLA, 1973

World put to rights on *What's Going On*, Gaye retired to the boudoir. His first major foray into funk confronted his conflicted approach to sex and spirituality, seeking sonic sexual epiphany.

364 LONNIE LISTON SMITH & THE COSMIC ECHOES
EXPANSIONS
FLYING DUTCHMAN, 1974

Continuing in the spiritual/starbound quest, Smith draws on bossa tunes and fractionally more pronounced grooves for his soul-jazz third, leaning a fair way into the funk. One might imagine Paul Weller vibing.

363 CARLA BLEY/PAUL HAINES
ESCALATOR OVER THE HILL
JCOA RECORDS, 1971

Recorded over three years and ending, on the LP version, on a locked groove, Bley's jazz opera starring Linda Ronstadt, Don Cherry, Jack Bruce and others trod the boards between Indian music, Kurt Weill, free jazz and rock.

378 PETER HAMMILL
OVER
CHARISMA, 1977

Hammill mourns the end of a relationship with the mysterious Alice on a sixth album of bare songs originally titled 'Over My Shoulder'. "(On Tuesdays She Used To Do) Yoga" is truly devastating.

377 SPARKS
KIMONO MY HOUSE
ISLAND, 1974

Oddball brothers Ron and Russell Mael leave the US to base themselves in the UK and hit glam pop paydirt with "This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us". Its influence would be broad-reaching, inspiring the Sex Pistols, The Smiths and Björk.

374 SHIRLEY COLLINS
AMARANTH
HARVEST, 1976

Intended, Collins wrote on the sleeve, to be her last album. On one side, the "Anthems In Eden" suite, crumhorns, sackbuts and all, from 1969. On the other, a new selection of trad arrs, recorded with the assistance of various Fairports. A wonderful recording.

373 DR FEELGOOD
DOWN BY THE JETTY
UA, 1975

Back to mono! The Canvey Island pub rockers present revivalism as shock tactics, in a dirty white suit. Raw R&B cuts like "Roxette" give advance notice of the punk rock to come.

370 GRAHAM PARKER AND THE RUMOUR
SQUEEZING OUT SPARKS
ARISTA/VERTIGO, 1979

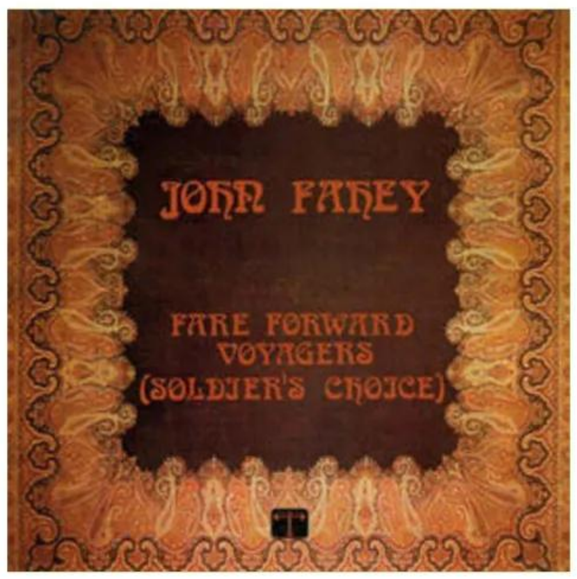
Originally written as a suburban concept album, Parker's fourth record laces pub-rock traditionalism with Costello-brand new wave to vital effect. The horn section went on to appear on *London Calling*.

369 CURVED AIR
PHANTASMAGORIA
WARNER BROS, 1972

A spot of the old "Ultra-Vivaldi"? Curved Air's prog-classical third delivered art-rock pieces about French revolution, masturbation and ghostly goings-on, and pioneered synth-rock with its EMS Synthi 100 effects on Sonja Kristina's voice come side two.

366 PRINCE
PRINCE
WARNER BROS, 1979

His second album shows Prince growing in confidence. If he can sometimes be too keen to unleash his guitar chops, there's a visionary modern funk being revealed here with "Sexy Dancer" and "I Wanna Be Your Lover". "I Feel For You" was later massive for Chaka Khan.



365 JOHN FAHEY
FARE FORWARD VOYAGERS (SOLDIER'S CHOICE)
TAKOMA, 1973

Getting involved with the Northern Californian spiritual community of Swami Satchidananda (because he fell in love with the Swami's secretary), Fahey developed the Indian raga strand to his Americana folk finger-picking.

362 WIRE
CHAIRS MISSING
HARVEST, 1978

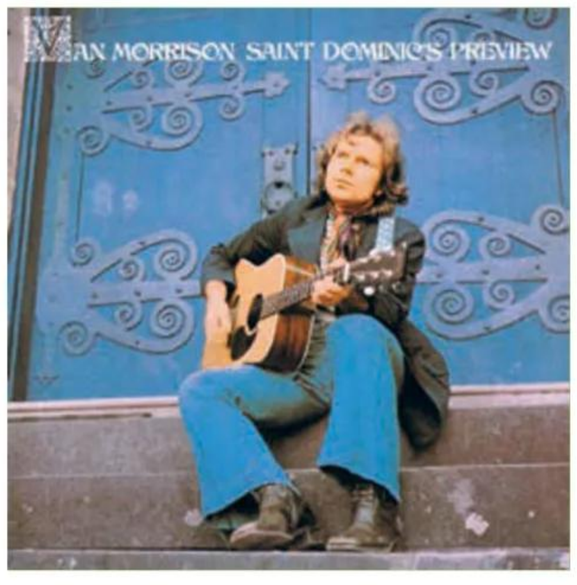
Bleak lyrical concerns and glimpses of sonic expansion creep in as the post-punk plot thickens and the gothic finds an art-rock foothold. Yet, in the midst of it all, the charts are slightly bothered by the exceptionally melodic "Outdoor Miner".

361 SUN RA SOLAR-MYTH ARKESTRA
THE SOLAR-MYTH APPROACH VOLS 1 + 2
BYG ACTUEL, 1972

Clattering, rustling and misdirecting as they go ("Adventures Of Bugs Hunter", for instance, doesn't even have the drummer on it), the Arkestra create an intricately percussive and inventively cosmic dual release.

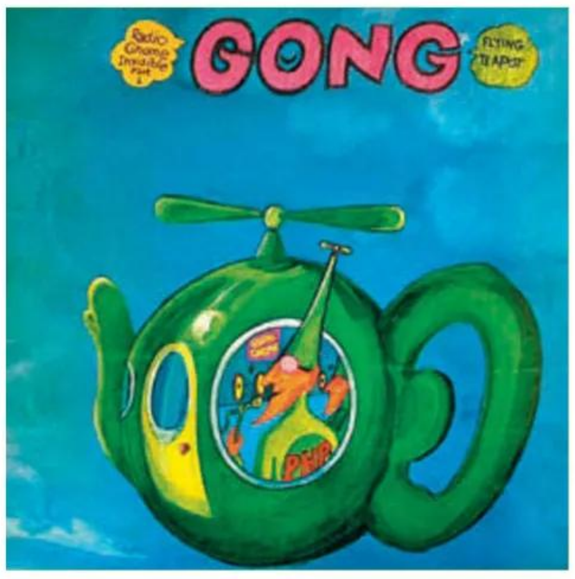
360 JIMI HENDRIX
THE CRY OF LOVE
REPRISE, 1971

A work in progress at the time of Hendrix's death, with roughly half virtually complete in his lifetime, *The Cry Of Love* has been accepted as a worthy entry into the official canon. A primal, sometimes rhapsodic testimonial.



359 VAN MORRISON
SAINT DOMINIC'S PREVIEW
WARNER BROS, 1972

There's something of the summary about Morrison's sixth album, as if Van is looking over his shoulder and giving us a little of everything. It's what he does best: folk, jazz, blues, R&B, freewheeling soul.



356 GONG
FLYING TEAPOT
VIRGIN, 1973

Released the same day as *Tubular Bells* and the first instalment in the Radio Gnome Invisible trilogy, *Flying Teapot* featured much alien babbling and Steve Hillage on "spermguitar and slow whale", such was its space-rock strangeness.

355 ELVIS PRESLEY
ELVIS COUNTRY (I'M 10,000 YEARS OLD)
RCA VICTOR, 1971

Elvis's country has a broad horizon. Bluegrass, rockabilly, honky-tonk, countrypolitan and even outlaw get a look-in on this million-selling Nashville project, largely laid down inside five days.

352 HALL & OATES
ABANDONED LUNCHEONETTE
ATLANTIC, 1973

Folk and pop met Philly soul on the second album by the Philadelphia duo, now resident in New York. Its pivotal track, "She's Gone", belatedly reached the US Top 10 when reissued three years later.

351 BLACK SABBATH
SABBATH BLOODY SABBATH
VERTIGO, 1973

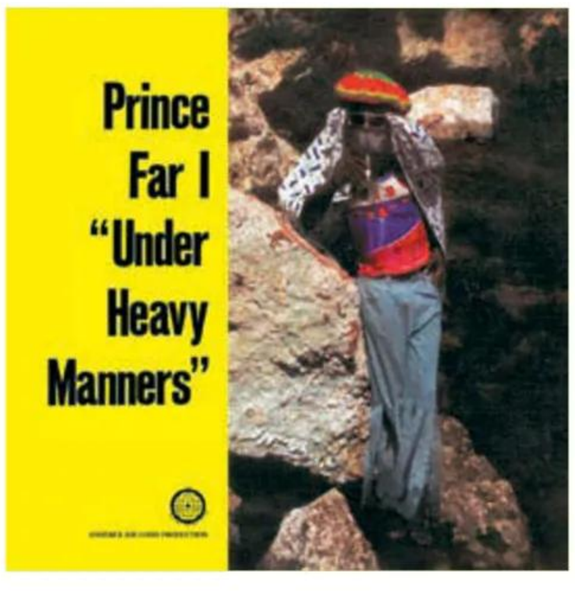
Despite tour fatigue and drug abuse, the Birmingham hard rock gods rediscovered their missing mojo in the haunted dungeons of Clearwell Castle. The title track's thunderous riff was the eureka moment to kickstart a creative rebirth.

348 THE DAMNED
DAMNED DAMNED DAMNED
STIFF, 1977

The first UK punk frontrunners to make it onto vinyl crackle with energy, goofy humour and buzzsaw riffs. Rat Scabies provides the swing, while Brian James' guitar eviscerates. Whatever the label said, this certainly wasn't Eddie And The Hot Rods. Neat-neat-neat!

347 ENNIO MORRICONE
MADDALENA
QUARTET RECORDS, 1971

Classic 1970s Morricone soundtrack famed for its inclusion of pastoral synth composition "Chi Mai", later used in Georges Lautner's *Le Professionnel* and 1981 BBC series *The Life And Times Of David Lloyd George*, which propelled it to No 2 in the UK.



344 PRINCE FAR I
UNDER HEAVY MANNERS
JOE GIBBS RECORD GLOBE, 1977

Joe Gibbs and Errol Thompson provide a spacey backdrop for some deep-pile vocal righteousness. The title refers to Jamaica's state of emergency, declared in 1976, and the Prince weighs in on matters spiritual and political.

343 GENTLE GIANT
OCTOPUS
VERTIGO, 1972

Brit prog rockers at their peak, before founding member and singer Phil Shulman quit. "Knots" was inspired by the writings of notorious psychologist RD Laing, other tracks by the idea of writing a song about each member of the band.

358 EMMYLOU HARRIS
PIECES OF THE SKY
REPRISE, 1975

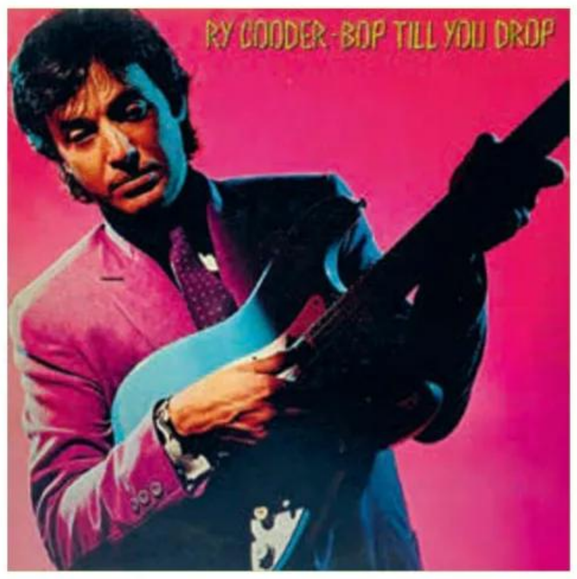
Not really her debut (that's 1970's *Gilding Bird*) but it may as well be – Harris's pure, cut-glass voice in perfect consort with an open-minded Nashville cohort. Country at its most catholic.

357 FELA KUTI
GENTLEMAN
EMK, 1973

Championing African identity over the expectations of western colonialism, Kuti weaves a masterpiece around three Afrobeat jazz tracks, bedecked with his own work on tenor sax, which he'd learnt following Igo Chico's departure from the Afrika 70 band.

354 DIANA ROSS
DIANA ROSS
TAMLA MOTOWN, 1976

Her '70s form is a bit patchy, but this one, along with *Surrender*, is a stunner, with some lush ballads. Includes Ross's first entry into the disco game, the undeniable "Love Hangover".



353 RY COODER
BOP TILL YOU DROP
WARNER BROS, 1979

An early rock'n'roll and R&B covers collection – Presley's "Little Sister"; Fontella Bass and Bobby McClure's "Don't Mess Up A Good Thing", now featuring Chaka Khan – that gained much historical relevance as the first major-label LP ever recorded digitally.

350 MAGMA
MËKANÏK DËSTRUCTÏW KÖMMANDÖH
A&M, 1973

MDK for short, and the French prog rockers' most acclaimed album, despite being initially rejected by their label. Sung in the fictional language of Kobaian and steeped in similarly Germanic drama and operatic fanfare.

349 LITTLE FEAT
THE LAST RECORD ALBUM
WARNER BROS, 1975

A titular wordplay on *The Last Picture Show* rather than a wistful farewell. Feat came off the gas for this luscious fifth album, arguably the last of their imperial period. Sublime cuts "All That You Dream" and "Long Distance Love" justify entry alone.

346 LAURA NYRO
CHRISTMAS AND THE BEADS OF SWEAT
COLUMBIA, 1970

The songwriter's songwriter returns with another clutch of soul and jazz-informed pearls, completing a trilogy with *Eli And The Thirteen Confessions* and *New York Tendaberry*. Her voice is strident and comforting in equal measure, resonating through her elliptical melodies.

345 RICKIE LEE JONES
RICKIE LEE JONES
WARNER BROS, 1979

Dr John, Michael MacDonald and Randy Newman are among the players supporting jazz, rock and R&B singer Rickie Lee Jones on her debut, populated by LA street characters – Chuck E, Bragger, Kid Sinister and their ilk – and given extra character by Jones's rich vocals.

342 BUZZCOCKS
LOVE BITES
UNITED ARTISTS, 1978

Ever fallen in love with a record you shouldn't've fallen in love with? Not a problem for fans of Buzzcocks' second, a punk-pop document built around one of the genre's most contagious tunes.

341 THIN LIZZY
JAILBREAK
VERTIGO, 1976

As Vertigo lost faith, one last roll of the dice for Phil Lynott's hard rock crew produced a sixth album teeming with lowlifes and bristling with last-chance ferocity. "The Boys Are Back In Town" and the title track became defining features of late-'70s cult rock.

340 GENESIS FOXTROT

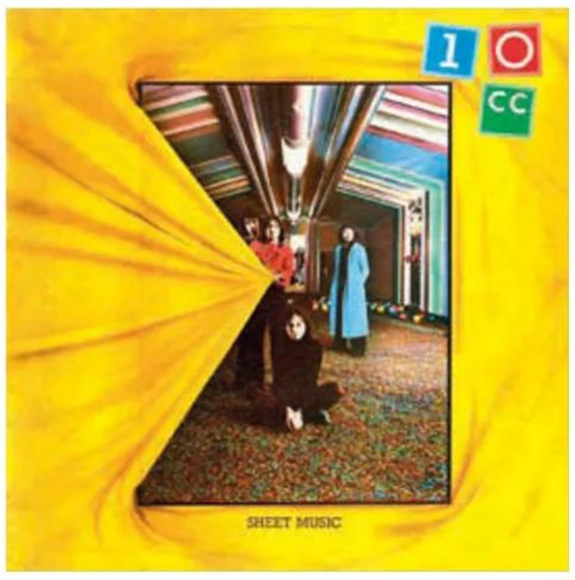
CHARISMA, 1972

Twenty-three-minute Side Two suite "Supper's Ready" charts the death-afterlife journey in tricky time signatures. Elsewhere, socially conscious sci-fi character dramas ("Get 'Em Out By Friday") and frenzied visions of alien overseers ("Watcher Of The Skies") abound.

339 EMMYLOU HARRIS ELITE HOTEL

REPRISE, 1975

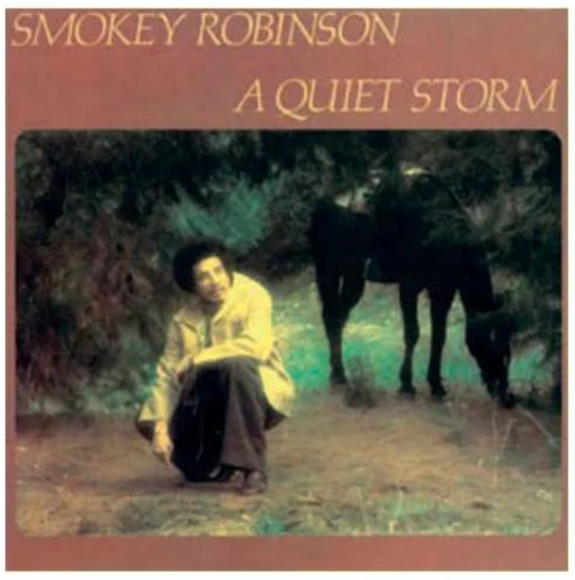
On *Elite Hotel* Harris returns to the songs of her former collaborator, the late Gram Parsons – and no-one interpreted his material better. She has a voice for the ages.



336 10cc SHEET MUSIC

UK, 1974

10cc's eclectic second has since become an art-pop benchmark. "The Wall Street Shuffle" led the charge chartward, with "The Worst Band In The World" and the title pun second-guessing critics with their samba, mariachi, flamenco and talking-timebomb escapades.



335 SMOKEY ROBINSON A QUIET STORM

TAMLA, 1975

Motown legend gets wistful, while retaining that unique falsetto and his instinct for tunes of rare romantic resonance. Credited with revitalising Robinson's post-Miracles career with the hit "Baby That's Backatcha".

332 LED ZEPPELIN THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME

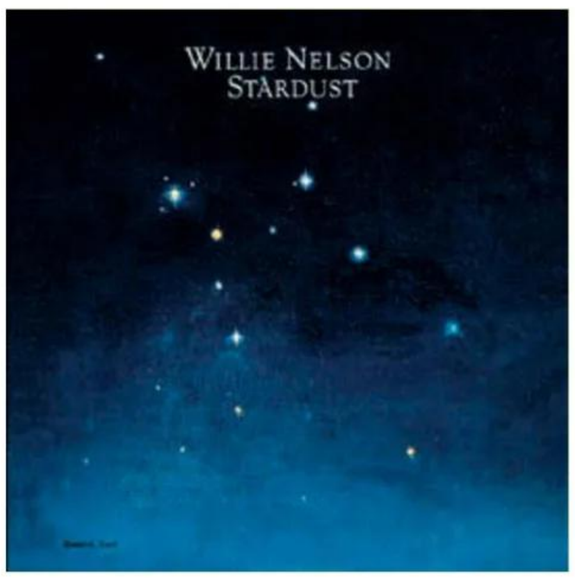
SWAN SONG, 1976

The "world's most expensive home movie" came with an impressive soundtrack. The packaging and the backstory spoke volumes about excess but there was still fire in the occasionally muddy mix: the title track and "Since I've Been Loving You", to name two.

331 JORGE BEN A TÁBUA DE ESMERELDA

PHILIPS, 1974

Mysticism, alchemy, transmutation and the teachings of theosophy all fed into the 11th record from Brazil's father of samba rock, among his most experimental releases and the spark of a mid-'70s explosion in samba reinvention.



328 WILLIE NELSON STARDUST

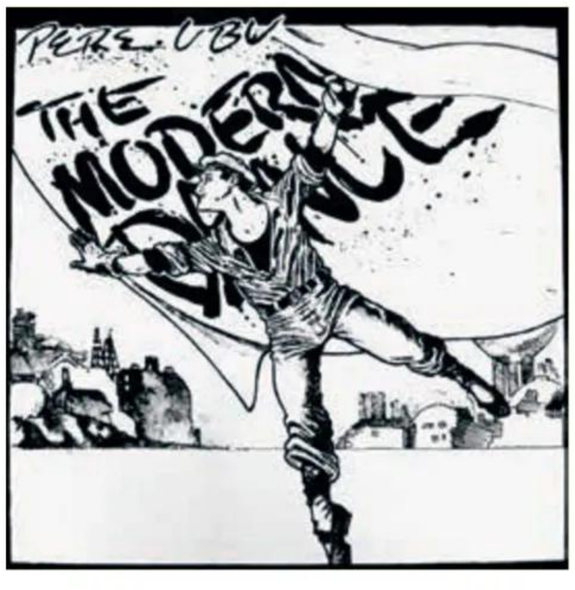
COLUMBIA, 1978

The outlaw goes straight. Ten pop standards – among them "Georgia On My Mind", "Unchained Melody", "On The Sunny Side Of The Street" – given sweet country succour in tribute to the songs that inspired him.

327 MIKE HERON SMILING MEN WITH BAD REPUTATIONS

ISLAND, 1971

Taking time off from the Incredible String Band but not from exotic instrumentation or atmospheric songwriting, Heron is also increasingly unafraid to rock. Pete Townshend and Keith Moon were up for it. And you?



324 PERE UBU THE MODERN DANCE

BLANK, 1978

Feedback, clickbeats and ramshackle rock'n'roll introduce a weird, wired and occasionally terrifying punk debut. Cleveland mavericks apply proggy art-school theory to splenetic punk rock and create "avant garage".

323 JULIUS HEMPHILL DOGON A.D.

M'BARI, 1972

"The hard blues" was song title and ethos for Hemphill's trio in 1972 – a band with the chaos and discipline of the Jimi Hendrix Experience. The leader tears into fruity solos, but the dynamic cello playing of Abdul Wadud is an absolutely key element of their fire.

338 CHEAP TRICK
CHEAP TRICK
EPIC, 1977

Harder and rougher than the power pop they'd come to be known for, the Illinois rockers' debut didn't shy away. "The Ballad Of TV Violence (I'm Not The Only Boy)" concerned serial killer Richard Speck; "Oh, Candy" a friend of the band who committed suicide.

337 GLADYS KNIGHT & THE PIPS
STANDING OVATION
SOUL, 1971

Midway between the soul bellows of their Motown era and the glossier pop territory to come, Knight and the Pips find a happy medium in the sumptuous big balladry of *Standing Ovation*, including Beatles, Hollies and Simon & Garfunkel showstoppers.

334 AUGUSTUS PABLO
KING TUBBYS MEETS ROCKERS UPTOWN
YARD INT, 1976

A memorable sonic exchange as Pablo sprinkles melodica magic over King Tubby's peerless dub rumble. "Baby I Love You So" is held up as one of dub's greatest ever recordings.

333 DR JOHN
IN THE RIGHT PLACE
ATCO, 1973

The good doctor's sixth and best-selling album introduces the wider public to New Orleans funk rock with "Right Place Wrong Time". Breaches enough genre borders for "Such A Night" to wind up getting covered by The Band and the Doc at The Last Waltz.

330 BRIAN ENO
TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN (BY STRATEGY)
ISLAND, 1974

The Oblique Strategies cards first come into play on Eno's second solo album, guiding a wide-ranging geopolitical concept album – espionage, the Chinese Communist revolution, air crashes and sex-crazed machines – into exploratory avant-pop areas.

329 LOU REED
STREET HASSLE
ARISTA, 1978

Part live set, part studio recording, and with Bruce Springsteen making an uncredited cameo, *Street Hassle* saw Reed embrace the nihilist tones of punk while dredging his own darkest corners for confessional redemption.

326 JOHNNY CASH
MAN IN BLACK
COLUMBIA, 1971

His 38th album, no less. Here, on the record that gave him his nickname, a politicised Cash takes the temperature of his times, stripped-back production highlighting Cash's resonant baritone – heavy and profound.

325 LEE HAZLEWOOD
COWBOY IN SWEDEN
LHI, 1970

And he was, helping his son avoid the Vietnam draft, allaying "tax problems" and making a soundtrack to a strange TV special. Gives that resonant baritone the chance to refract country and folk songs through lysergic lenses.

322 JOHN CALE
SLOW DAZZLE
ISLAND, 1975

Fifth solo album, featuring Beach Boy tributes ("Mr Wilson"), marital infidelity ("Guts"; key lyric "*the bugger in the short sleeves fucked my wife*") and an inspired, synth-led and scream-infused cover of Elvis Presley's "Heartbreak Hotel".

321 ROBERTA FLACK
KILLING ME SOFTLY
ATLANTIC, 1973

Dark blues met stylish pop on Flack's introspective fifth, sent double platinum by the Billboard-topping single "Killing Me Softly With His Song". A sensitive nine-minute cover of Leonard Cohen's "Suzanne" cherries the cake.

320 CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG
DÉJÀ VU
ATLANTIC, 1970

With Young in the fold and Jerry Garcia stopping by to join in, it still took 800 hours of ironically prickly sessions to produce this laidback classic. "Carry On" opened things up thrillingly; their cover of Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock" added groove to the original.

319 CAPTAIN BEEFHEART
CLEAR SPOT
REPRISE, 1972

Come album seven, Beefheart wanted greater commercial success, which felt pretty ambitious. *Clear Spot*'s genius is its playful abstraction and tightly drilled groove. Do the low yo yo!

316 YOKO ONO
APPROXIMATELY INFINITE UNIVERSE
APPLE, 1973

It wasn't only John Lennon who changed tack for pop after *Some Time In New York City*. *Approximately*... is a sophisticated pop-rock album, with its raw emotions sublimated in reassuringly expensive arrangements. Avant-garde feminist disco? Come right in.

315 VAN DYKE PARKS
DISCOVER AMERICA
WARNER BROS, 1972

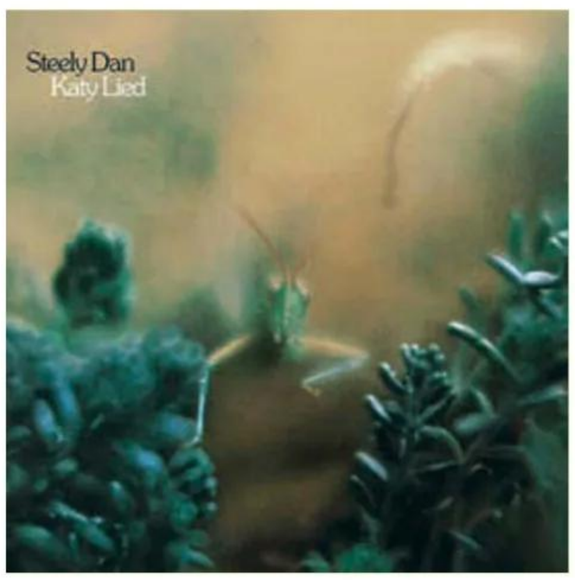
A collection of covers of Allen Toussaint, Little Feat and various public domain antiquities, Parks' second solo album is pure pleasure from start to end. A comprehensive but somehow understated collage of steel bands, calypso, swooning strings and schmoozy pop.

312 TOM WAITS
BLUE VALENTINE
ASYLUM, 1978

Adding electric guitar and keyboards, a bluesy if equally boozy mood takes our sozzled hero. And he's as hopelessly, bizarrely romantic as ever, even when inhabiting the story of "Christmas Card From A Hooker In Minneapolis".

311 HARRY NILSSON
NILSSON SCHMILSSON **RCA, 1971**

This one gave Nilsson his biggest hit, the evergreen "Without You", and is by all measures his best album, a goldmine of pop-rock classicism. Features also the questionable cod-Caribbean "Coconut", and the LCD Soundsystem favourite "Jump Into The Fire" .

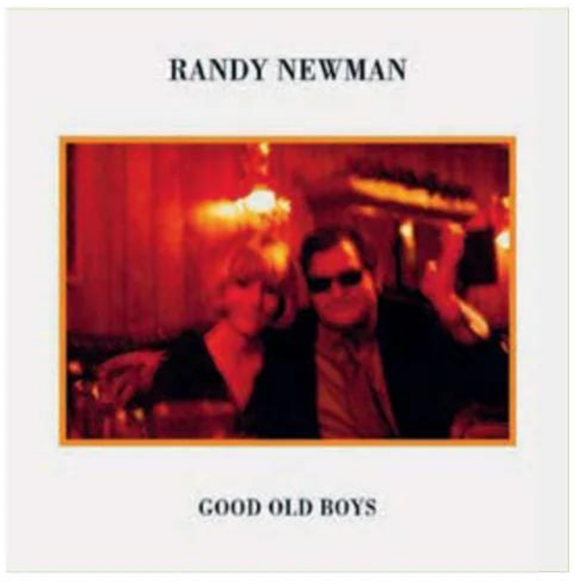


308 STEELY DAN
KATY LIED
ABC, 1975

The Dan transition to a studio outfit, polishing the jazz and blues elements of *Pretzel Logic* to an immaculate sheen and certainly not scrimping on the hooklines. Nice calypso larks, too, on "Everyone's Gone To The Movies".

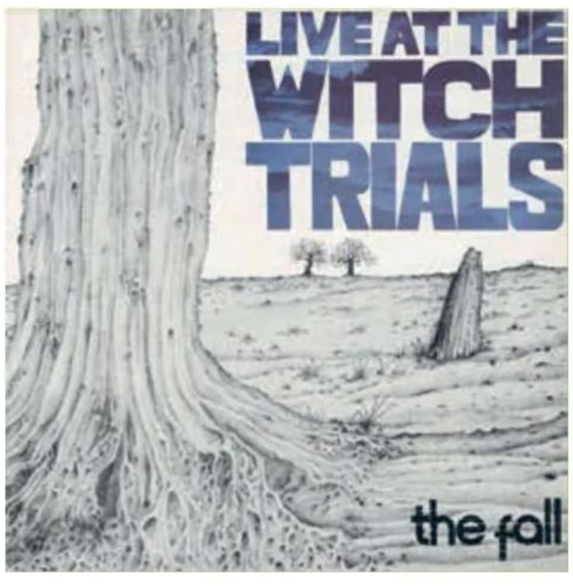
307 POPOL VUH
HOSIANNA MANTRA
PILZ, 1972

Abandoning synthesisers for acoustic instructions and envisioning a cultural meeting of minds between east and west, Florian Fricke fused space rock, classical music and eastern vibes with Korean soprano Djong Yun's gossamer hints of vocal into an ever-folding sonic tapestry.



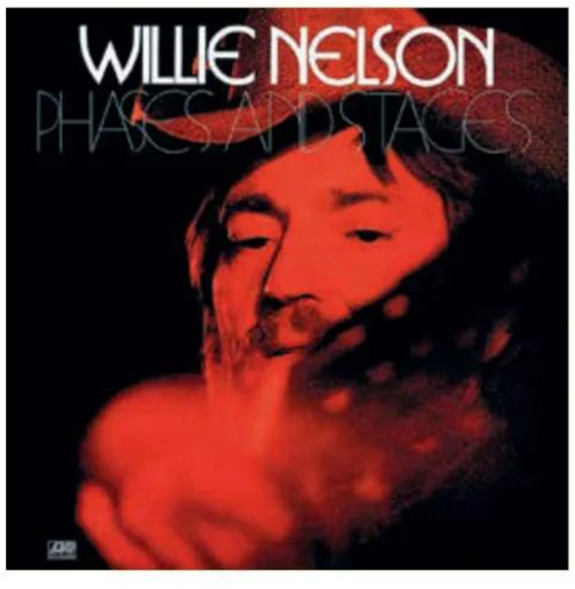
304 RANDY NEWMAN
GOOD OLD BOYS
REPRISE, 1974

Conceived as a concept album about Deep South everyman Johnny Cutler, Newman's fourth album developed a wider cast, the better to confront, in provocative first person, taboo topics such as racism and slavery.



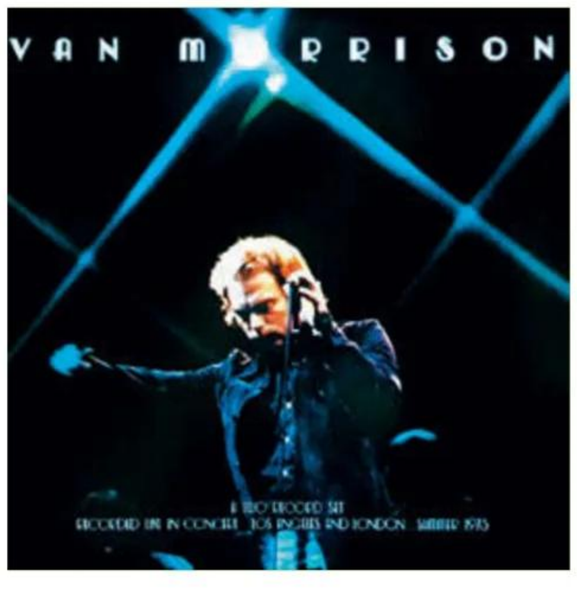
303 THE FALL
LIVE AT THE WITCH TRIALS
STEP FORWARD, 1978

Not actually live, but it *is* often judgemental. Firebrand orator Mark E Smith steps up to his DIY pulpit for the first time, decrying drugs, dead-end jobs and the music industry in general. You know he makes sense-uh...



318 WILLIE NELSON
PHASES AND STAGES
ATLANTIC, 1974

Success in his sights following *Shotgun Willie*, here was Nelson's loose concept album, detailing a divorce from both sides. It's raw, close to reportage at times, with Nelson's band on fire and his lyrical insights into marital breakdown sharp.



317 VAN MORRISON
IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP NOW
WARNER BROS, 1974

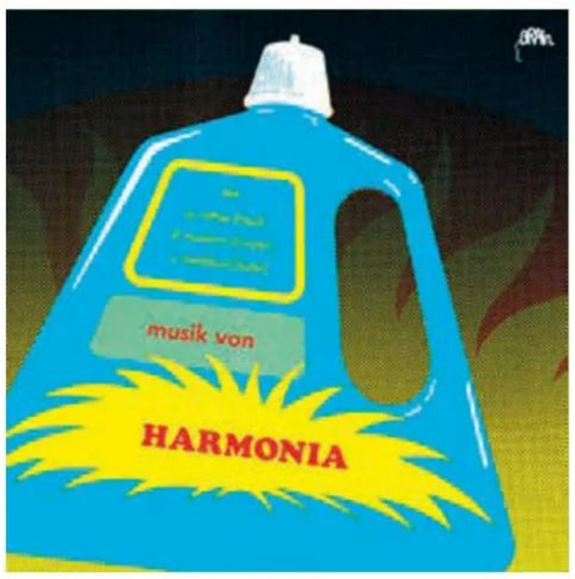
One of the best live albums of all time. Between the LA Troubadour, the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium and the London Rainbow, Morrison's band is razor-sharp, wired, almost Cubist in its logic.

314 LABI SIFFRE
CRYING LAUGHING LOVING LYING
PYE INTERNATIONAL, 1972

Siffre's 1970s peak – only 1987's "(Something Inside) So Strong" would surpass its singles, chart-wise – was the gently subversive folk-soul home to the Paul Simon-esque title track and "It Must Be Love", an eventual smash for Madness.

313 GONG
CAMEMBERT ELECTRIQUE
BYG ACTUEL, 1971

Strong and streaming, mate! Whimsical jazz-prog by France-dwelling Canterbury scenesters. Dreamy vocals and expansive rock improvisations, all piloted by Daevid Allen. A rougher take on the pot/pixies world sublimated on *Flying Teapot* and beyond.

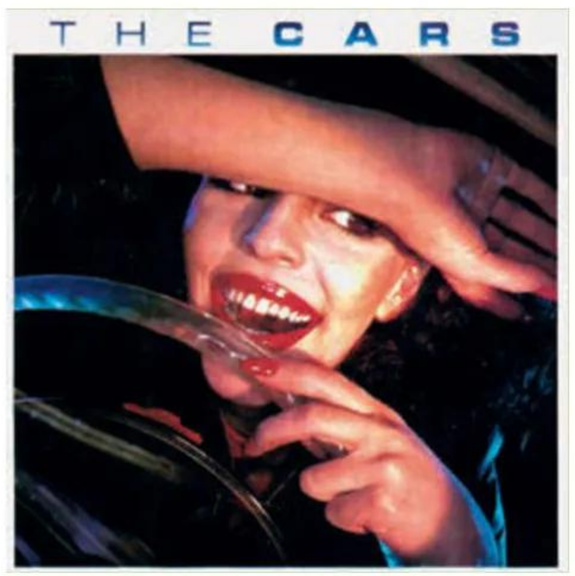


310 HARMONIA
MUSIK VON HARMONIA
BRAIN, 1974

Following an introductory jam session described as "musical love at first sight", Cluster and Neu!'s Michael Rother explore new, cosmic, territory. Less abrasive than their contemporaries but just as mechanically hypnotic.

309 KING TUBBY AND LEE PERRY
KING TUBBY MEETS THE UPSETTER AT THE GRASS ROOTS OF DUB
FAY MUSIC/TOTAL SOUNDS, 1974

Deep dub grooves make the acquaintance of sultry trumpet, spectral upswings and spare percussion on Tubby's second collaboration with Perry and a pivotal dub recording.



306 THE CARS
THE CARS
ELEKTRA, 1978

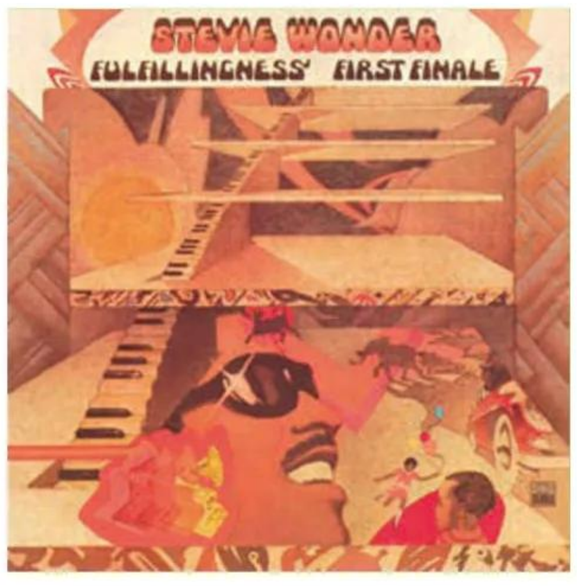
Million-selling debut by Boston outfit cruising easily between new wave and synth-rock. Spurred on by smash hit singles "My Best Friend's Girl" and "Just What I Needed", there was more to discover besides.

305 KRIS KRISTOFFERSON
THE SILVER-TONGUED DEVIL AND I
MONUMENT, 1971

Articulate outlaw country, including – between its tales of drug overdoses, Vietnam and Nashville's Tally-Ho Tavern – ruminations on Johnny Cash, Dennis Hopper and Harry Dean Stanton ("The Pilgrim") and a tribute to Janis Joplin ("Epitaph").

302 TOWNES VAN ZANDT
HIGH LOW AND IN BETWEEN
POPPY, 1971

Caught on the horns of many a devil's dilemma, country-folk survivor Van Zandt's fifth record hovers between heaven (gospel hosannas "Two Hands" and "When He Offers His Hand") and hell ("No Deal"). He makes both options sound delightful.



301 STEVIE WONDER
FULFILLINGNESS' FIRST FINALE
TAMLA, 1974

Despite attacking the Nixon administration on US No 1 "You Haven't Done Nothin'", the socially conscious tone of *Innervisions* gave way to a more sombre and introspective aspect for Wonder's 17th record.

300 THE KINKS
EVERYBODY'S IN SHOW-BIZ
RCA, 1972

A new decade, a new Ray Davies. Well kind of: a man able to elevate the mundane, here he brought the supposed high life of being a rock star crashing down to earth. Far beyond solipsistic whining, the augmented Kinks offered groovy, thoughtful and accessible pop.

299 CYMANDE
CYMANDE
JANUS, 1972

Caribbean Brits fire up the capital's jazz-funk scene on a debut that would be mined for many a languid sample-friendly groove. "Nyah rock" they called it, and its reign would be sweet, if maddeningly short.

296 FRANCIS LAI
BILITIS OST
WARNER BROS, 1977

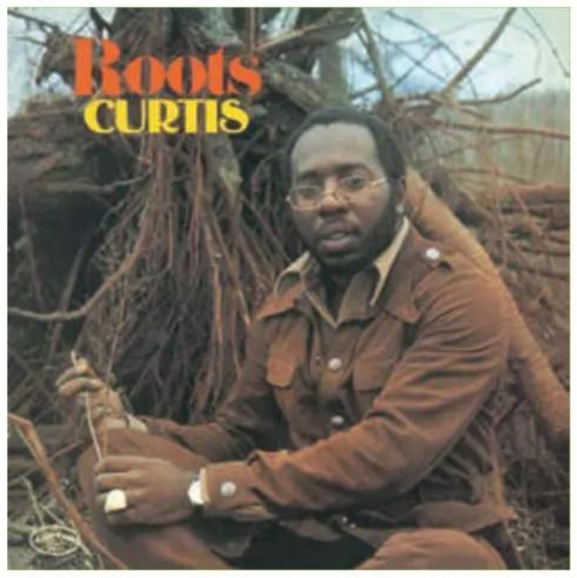
French erotica soundtrack which has its fans. Floating synths and light Mantovani-style themes accompany the story of a schoolgirl's vacation "awakening" when staying with a married couple in the countryside. It was the 1970s.

295 JOE GIBBS & THE PROFESSIONALS
AFRICAN DUB ALL-MIGHTY
RECORD GLOBE, 1976

Gibbs, Errol Thompson ("The Mighty Two") and their band The Professionals were behind hundreds of singles. Enough, certainly, to run to several volumes of dubs – of which this is the first. The reverb is subtle, the melodies and rhythms upfront and tight.

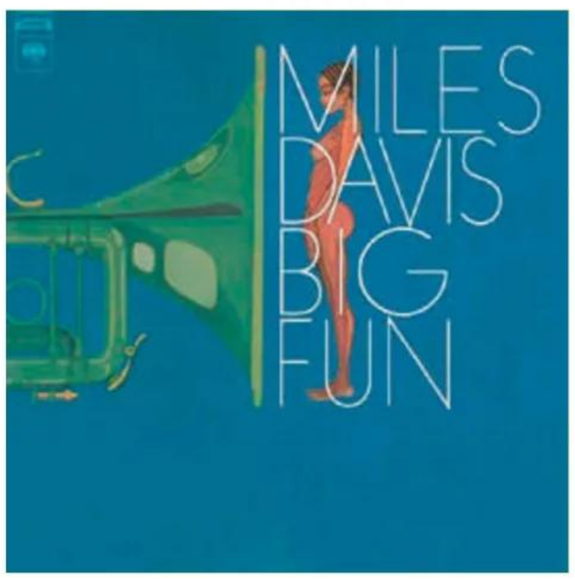
292 TEMPTATIONS
SKY'S THE LIMIT
GORDY, 1971

Last time out for Eddie Kendricks on this super-subtle collection. "Just My Imagination" is the big hit but Norman Whitfield's production also extends to epic Spaghetti Soul ("Smiling Faces Sometimes") and lightly worn social consciousness.



291 CURTIS MAYFIELD
ROOTS
CURTOM, 1971

"Keep On Keeping On" and "We've Got To Have Peace" mark the album out as one of Mayfield's best. Weirdly, it sold less than its predecessors.

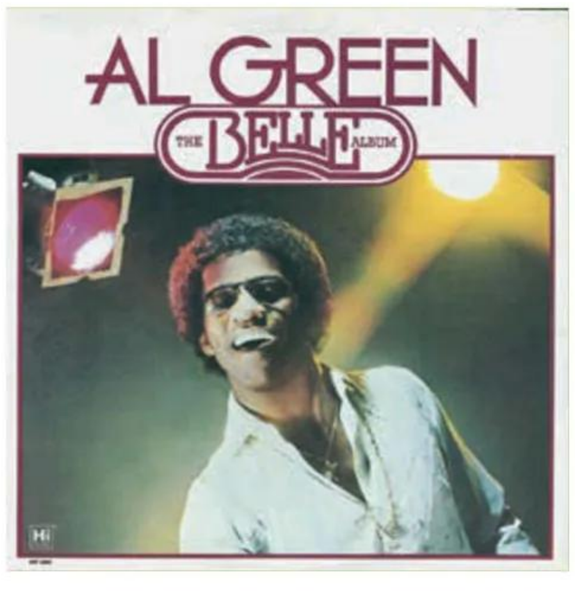


288 MILES DAVIS
BIG FUN COLUMBIA, 1974

In name a collection of outtakes spanning "Electric Miles" from 1969-1972, this plays like an immersive concept. John McLaughlin's guitar and Miles's own dolorous long lines traverse space between Miles past and Miles future, a hypnotic groove their engine. Incredible.

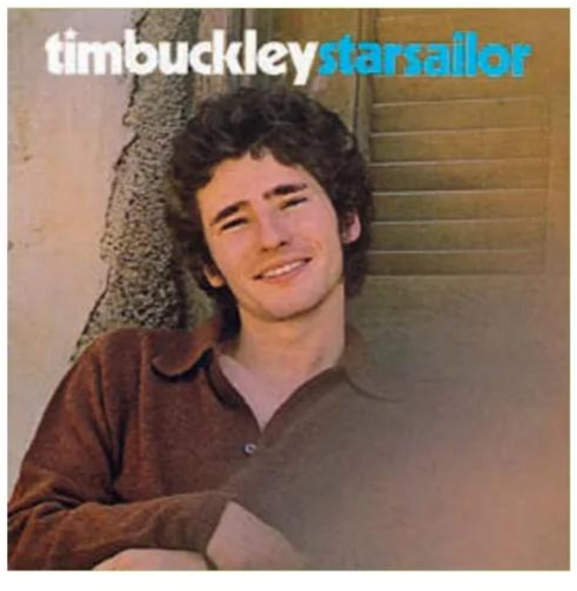
287 GRAM PARSONS
GRIEVOUS ANGEL
REPRISE, 1974

On his final album Parsons goes for the jugular with a devastating performance of "Love Hurts" with Emmylou Harris. The sound of a soul weeping.



284 AL GREEN
THE BELLE ALBUM
HI, 1977

Al Green picked up the guitar again on this album of self-composed songs. After a profitable association with producer Willie Mitchell, Green took the reins himself on a candid set honouring his religious faith and his passions alike.



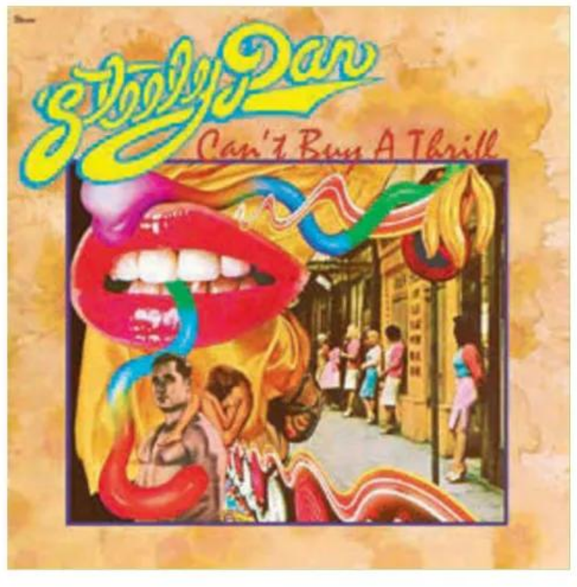
283 TIM BUCKLEY
STARSAILOR
STRAIGHT, 1970

Tim takes his music far out, invented a wild, rapturous, wide-eyed jazz-folk glossolalia. Features his classic "Song To The Siren".

298 SUPERTRAMP
CRISIS? WHAT CRISIS?

A&M, 1975

Compiling leftover tracks from the celebrated *Crime Of The Century*, the UK's prime prog-poppers created a sophisticated melodic blueprint for *Breakfast In America*, with "Sister Moonshine" and "A Soapbox Opera" showing Roger Hodgson's melodic ascendance.



297 STEELY DAN
CAN'T BUY A THRILL

ABC, 1971

The most "band-like" of their records, this infectiously harmonic debut features megahits "Do It Again" and "Reeling In The Years". Joint lead singer David Palmer has writing credits on five songs, but quit after the album's release.

294 SWELL MAPS
A TRIP TO MARINEVILLE

RATHER/ROUGH TRADE, 1979

Proof that 18 wrongs can make a right, the DIY Birmingham art punks' scattershot debut crackled and fizzed with such cranky invention that it essentially invented Sonic Youth. All this and tunes too.

293 THE ISLEY BROTHERS
3+3

T-NECK, 1973

An expanded lineup tightens up the funk punch and adds rock edge. But crucially, they also seem to enhance the soul.

290 STEVIE WONDER
MUSIC OF MY MIND

TAMLA, 1972

Get on your camel and ride! A thick and richly textured album of irresistible grooves, almost entirely self-played, from keyboards to drums, soup to nuts. Promoted while support act to The Rolling Stones.

289 NEU!
NEU! 2

BRAIN, 1973

A degree of trickery in play here, as the Neu! duo expand their material and fill out the second side of the album with varispeed reworkings of their "Neuschnee"/"Super" single. It's not as good as the driving first side but it's a playful solution to a financial problem.

286 ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA
ELDORADO

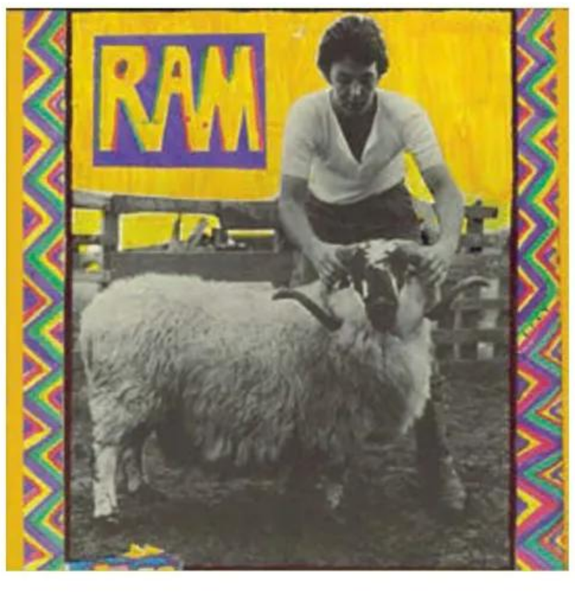
WARNER BROS, 1974

A *Pepper*-esque symphony was always going to be on ELO's bucket list. Next stop, chamber pop chart supremacy.

285 BOBBY WOMACK
UNDERSTANDING

UNITED ARTISTS, 1972

Partly recorded at Muscle Shoals, and you can tell. Womack's fourth is a deep dive into funk-soul, with an unexpected hit in "Woman's Gotta Have It".



282 PAUL & LINDA McCARTNEY
RAM

APPLE, 1971

Domestic bliss isn't quite as simple as it sounds. After his low-key debut, the McCartneys indulge in retrospective score-settling, if cryptically so, on an album which was dismissed at the time but has grown in estimation.

281 COCKNEY REBEL
THE PSYCHOMODO

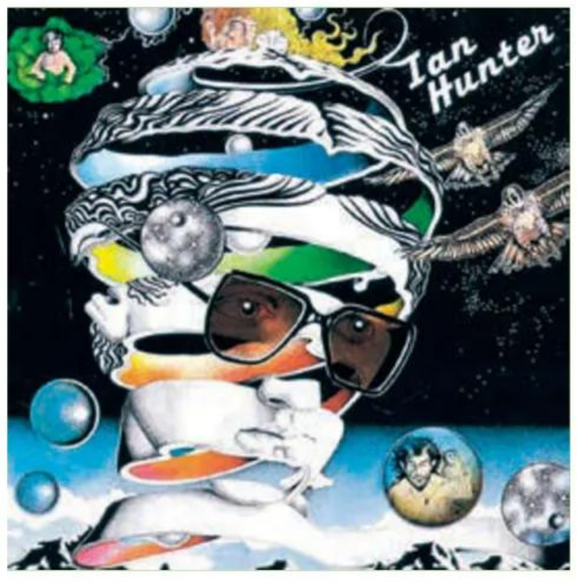
EMI, 1974

Second album for Steve Harley's glam gang. It's a weird one, a sickly, playful collection of disturbed vignettes, Harley's voice equal parts menace and melody.

280 TEMPTATIONS MASTERPIECE

GORDY, 1973

With Norman Whitfield's grip tighter yet, *Masterpiece* is the Temptations' soul odyssey. Some questioned whether it was still a band record. Yet it lands powerfully, especially on the majestic 14-minute title track.



279 IAN HUNTER IAN HUNTER

CBS, 1975

Mott The Hoople man goes solo, takes the Hoople mojo with him, borrowing Mick Ronson from Bowie's gang for a stripped-back glam and rock'n'roll slam.

276 ANDWELLA WORLD'S END

REFLECTION, 1970

Dave Lewis's band brought the "getting it together in the country" vibe to Northern Ireland. Bongos, bells and wah-wah summon the kaftans and incense of the *Let It Bleed* Stones, while Lewis's McCartneyish vocals offer a gentler side. A fine collection.

275 GENESIS WIND AND WUTHERING

CHARISMA, 1976

Genesis do their best to establish a new identity. The music can be divergent and ornamented, but Phil Collins's vocal commitment brings it all back to the songs. Mike Rutherford writes big ballad "Your Own Special Way". 'Tis medieval soft rock, sire.

272 LED ZEPPELIN LED ZEPPELIN III

ATLANTIC, 1970

Valhalla, they were coming. Nodding to trad sources (like "Gallows Pole", another one inspired by Bert Jansch) and superb gentler moments ("Since I've Been Loving You"), there's a demented folk-rock presence here, which the band animate with their own feral energy.

271 BERT JANSCH LA TURNAROUND

CHARISMA, 1974

Bert welcomes country rock influences (and players like fiddler Byron Berline) into his natural habitat of British folk. The songs seem invigorated by the experience.

268 TEMPTATIONS PSYCHEDELIC SHACK

MOTOWN, 1970

On their 12th album, the Temptations fully consolidated their embrace of psychedelia. Producer Norman Whitfield is holding the reigns, and the music's slippery, phased-out and wired, weirdly funky.

267 NEU! NEU 75

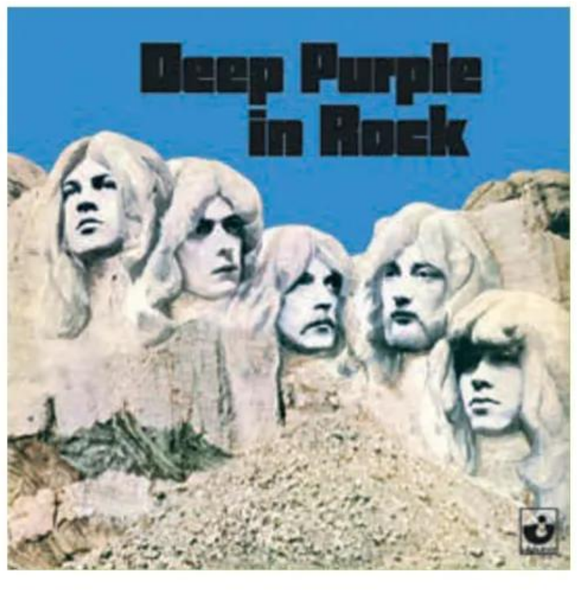
BRAIN, 1975

Going to Norway! Well, obviously...the balance between Michael Rother's beautiful glissandos and Klaus Dinger's unstoppable energy peaks on the punkish "Hero". Fear not, though – this is still an album on which a gentle "long line" guides us into a gleaming future.

264 ELIS REGINA AND ANTONIO CARLOS JOBIM

ELIS & TOM PHILIPS, 1974

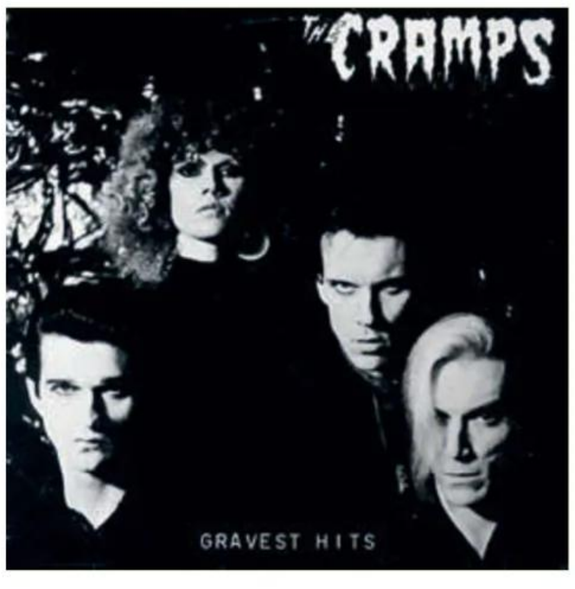
Bossa Nova deluxe. Enticing delicacy and much lovely sentiment, as Regina records an album of Jobim compositions to celebrate her 10th year with the label. Exquisite arrangements, delightful tunes – but it may be the charm that shines brightest from the project.



263 DEEP PURPLE IN ROCK

HARVEST, 1970

The screamo epic "Child In Time" is the lodestone of this breakthrough progressive monster. Ian Gillan's sexist lyrical tosh has dated very poorly, but elsewhere neither band nor university audience could believe they could have it this good, this loud.



278 THE CRAMPS
GRAVEST HITS
ILLEGAL, 1979

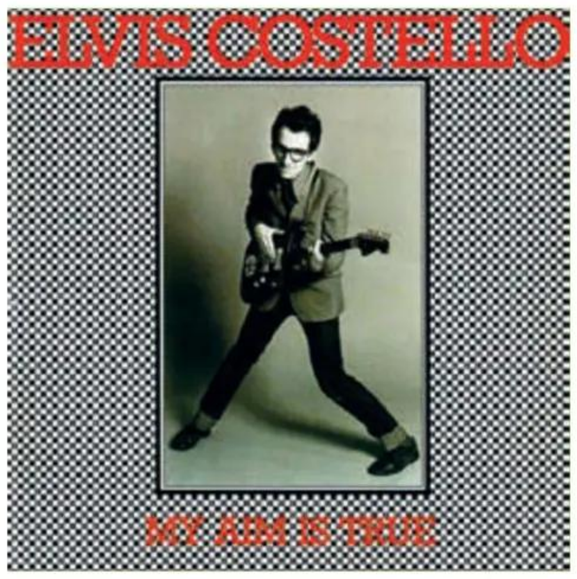
Raves from the grave! A compilation of the band's first efforts – as recorded by Alex Chilton. It might have been a mini-album, and a short one at that, but its rock punch was far harder than its ghoulish weight.

277 ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA
FACE THE MUSIC
JET, 1975

A band never afraid of the kitchen sink, this was an album where Jeff Lynne decided to pare things back a little bit. Relatively speaking, of course. Sumptuous disco strings and studio tricks abounded, but with the likes of "Evil Woman" so did the memorable tunes.

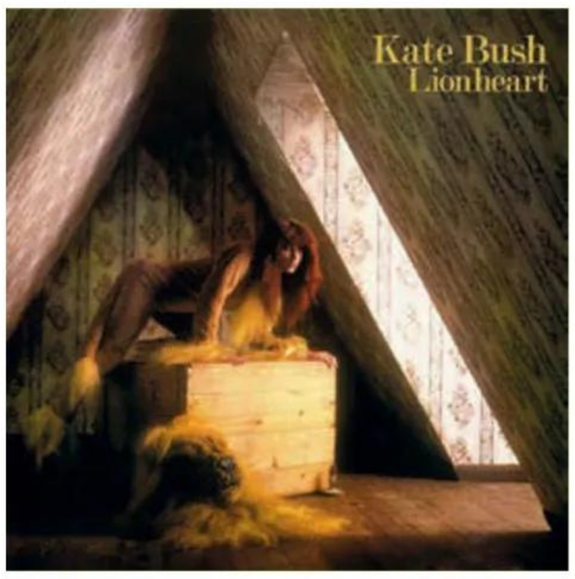
274 WAR
THE WORLD IS A GHETTO
UNITED ARTISTS, 1972

The California band continued their evolution. Longform grooves a speciality, social conscience their defining feature, their ear for arresting minimal instrumentation made this a head favourite.



273 ELVIS COSTELLO
MY AIM IS TRUE
STIFF, 1977

Audacious debut recorded while still working as a computer programmer. Country rockers Clover provide musical muscle, while "Less Than Zero" and "Alison" stand out.



270 KATE BUSH
LIONHEART
EMI, 1978

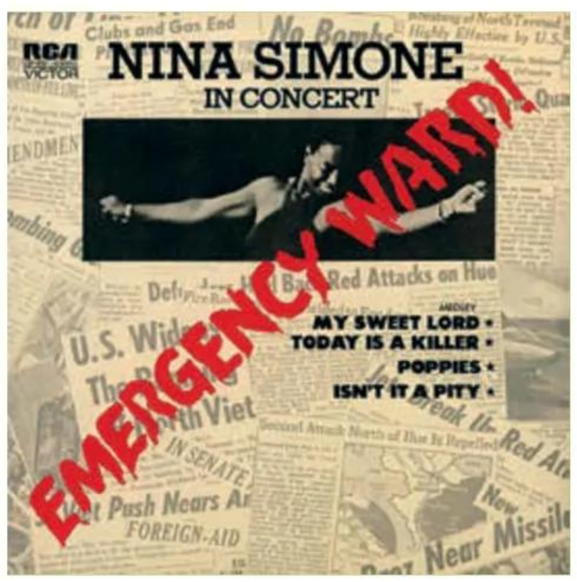
After the magnificent debut came the rushed follow-up. Not that this meant a falling off in quality. Looking back, KB revisited a catalogue of songs composed a couple of years earlier for a set which retained her mystical narratives. "Wow" fed the hit machine, too.

269 JIMMY CLIFF
THE HARDER THEY COME
ISLAND, 1972

Soundtrack to the gritty film, this is actually an enticingly polished collection. Blending Cliff's title track and earlier cuts, alongside vibrant classics from Desmond Dekker, the Maytals and Melodians, the album was a stellar primer for an entire new market to discover reggae.

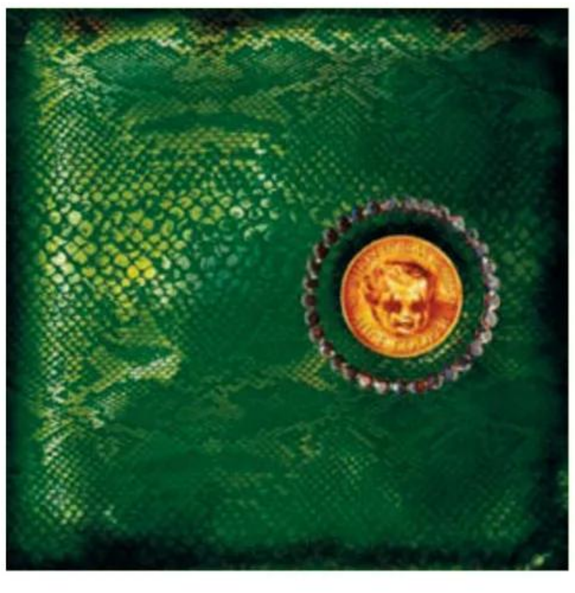
266 LED ZEPPELIN
HOUSES OF THE HOLY
ATLANTIC, 1973

The songs didn't actually remain the same. After their behemoth fourth album, here the band broadened their horizons to include multi-part folk rock chargers, funk rock, and even (very poor) reggae-based jokes. Don't sleep on "The Ocean", one of the band's best rockers.



265 NINA SIMONE
EMERGENCY WARD
RCA, 1972

Devastating even among Simone's politically charged live albums of the period. Live for the most part at Fort Dix, here she leans into George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord" for nearly 20 minutes – a vibrant gospel blowout, giving way to melancholy, an elegy for Vietnam.



262 ALICE COOPER
BILLION DOLLAR BABIES
WARNER BROS, 1973

The magic of Alice Cooper, the group, was their breadth – theatre, glam, rock, horror. It was never more powerful than here, both majestic and rotten.

261 MEATLOAF
BAT OUT OF HELL
CBS, 1977

Jim Steinmann's creation posited hard rock as musical theatre, and reaped the commercial rewards. One of the biggest selling albums of all time, the album nails '50s nostalgia, epic production and enduring compositions all in one infernal place.

260 JETHRO TULL
AQUALUNG
CHRYSALIS, 1971

Some fine playing here from the band, who need no encouragement to break into a folk-psych hoedown. "Locomotive Breath" apart, you'd have to say that the labyrinthine riffing can sometimes serve the concept more than the vitality of the music.

259 FRANK SINATRA
WATERTOWN
REPRISE, 1970

Bold move, for Sinatra to embrace the dark side quite like this. A kitchen sink drama with lyrics by Jake Holmes, it's a tale of abandonment, as a dad tries to raise his kids in New York State. Sinatra brings great vulnerability and character to this tough but tender listen.

256 THE ROLLING STONES
BLACK AND BLUE
ROLLING STONES, 1976

The Stones, ever pragmatic, pull something out of the bag. A man down following Mick Taylor's departure, Ron Wood yet to fully join, the band embrace eclecticism. Strong disco jams, unlikely reggae, and business-class balladry. "Hand Of Fate" was a rock classic, too.

255 CARAVAN
IN THE LAND OF GREY & PINK
DERAM, 1971

More confident still, and the last with the classic Caravan lineup. The songs are longer and stronger, the folksiness more evident. Another humble Canterbury classic.

252 FREE
FIRE AND WATER
ISLAND, 1970

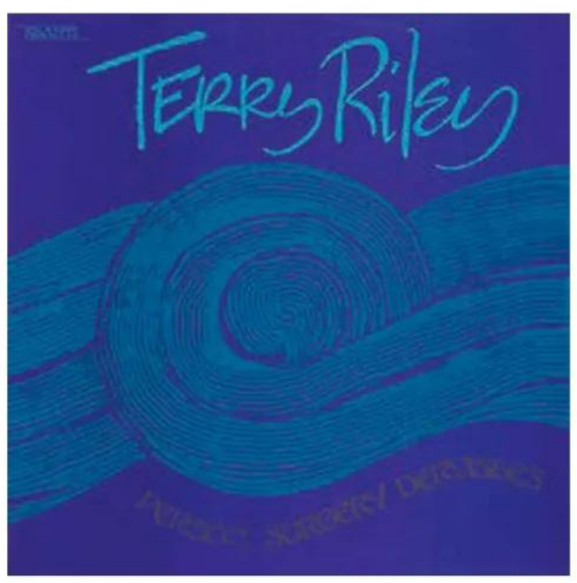
Breakthrough third album, spurred on by the global success of single "All Right Now" and a high-profile slot at the Isle Of Wight Festival. Slow-burning ballads like "Heavy Load" suggest their mastery of mood was at least as important as their rocking out.

251 LED ZEPPELIN
PRESENCE
SWAN SONG, 1976

Made by a band in troubled times – addiction; serious accidents; death – *Presence* never sounded so ready for war. The music is brutal but at its best is humid and funky: "Nobody's Fault But Mine" was a millionaire's blues storm kicked up from the depths of a predicament.

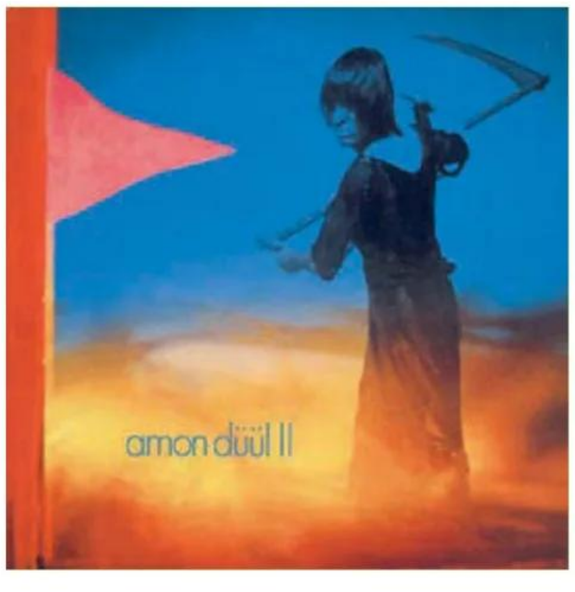
248 WILLIS ALAN RAMSEY
WILLIS ALAN RAMSEY
SHELTER, 1972

An 11-track Texan country folk gem is the sole release (so far) by a glaringly gifted songwriter. He's still promising a follow-up.



247 TERRY RILEY
PERSIAN SURGERY DERVISHES
SHANDAR, 1972

Ancient Asian musical shades colour an electronic originator's head-swimming soundscapes. A minimalist masterpiece.



244 AMON DÜÜL II
YETI
LIBERTY, 1970

Superbly recorded second album of German freakouts. Floppy jams and vocal incantations are one part of it. Addictive grooves like "Archangels Thunderbird" (as covered by The Breeders) quite another.

243 NEIL YOUNG
TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT
REPRISE, 1975

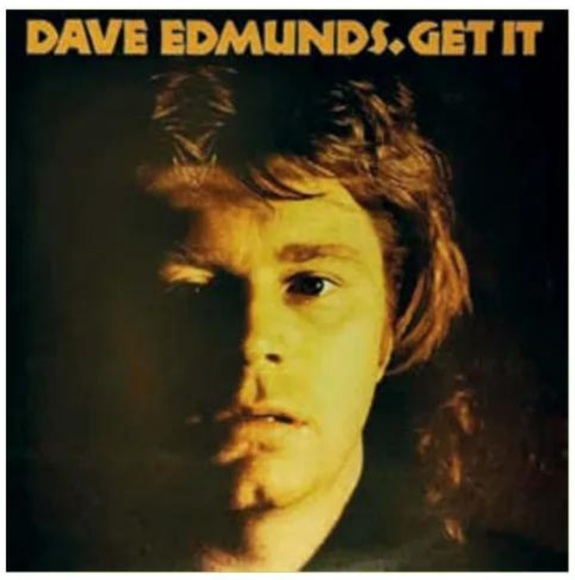
Straight from "the ditch". Frazzled by the death of close associates, Neil spoke out from the heart: instinctive, raw, electrifying, the sound of his best work. Boozy and wounded, here was music with no second takes, for a life with no second chances.

258 YES
THE YES ALBUM
ATLANTIC, 1971

The band's lesser-praised pastoral-prog classic. Tony Kaye's Hammond roars with vibes, while new guitarist Steve Howe is on fire throughout: riffs, astral lead lines, even some surprising Bakersfield hoedown. Singer Jon Anderson brings his most engaging folky melodies.

257 JOHN PRINE
SWEET REVENGE
ATLANTIC, 1973

Prine sang it like he meant it on this third album, painting pictures of hard-fought existence with deadpan articulacy, an impression assisted by sensitive work from producer Arif Mardin. "Christmas In Prison" is simply the best of its kind.



254 DAVE EDMUNDS
GET IT
SWAN SONG, 1977

What a shot in the arm Dave Edmunds was in 1977. As phlegm and manifesto rose around him, Edmunds hit the mainline of inspirational rock'n'roll cover versions to suggest we should keep an important objective in mind. You can imagine Robert Plant playing this still.

253 MICHAEL ROTHER
FLAMMENDE HERZEN
SKY, 1977

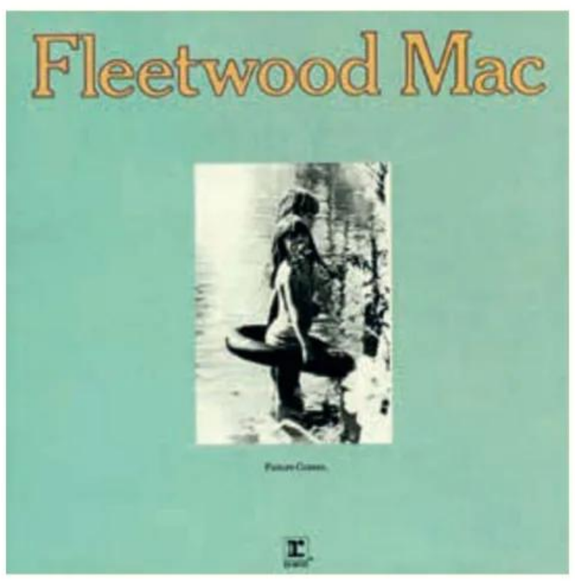
Now out of Kraftwerk, Neu! and Harmonia, guitarist Rother's *Flammende Herzen* is a ticking clock of an album, tracing that straight line out into the skyways, Can's Jaki Liebezeit pulsing the groove forever.

250 JOHN LENNON
MIND GAMES
APPLE, 1973

The world breathed a sigh of relief that this wasn't another *Some Time In New York City*. Instead, Lennon showed how he could channel the best of himself – strong vocals, weird tunes – at will. His minor – "Out Of The Blue" – was other people's major.

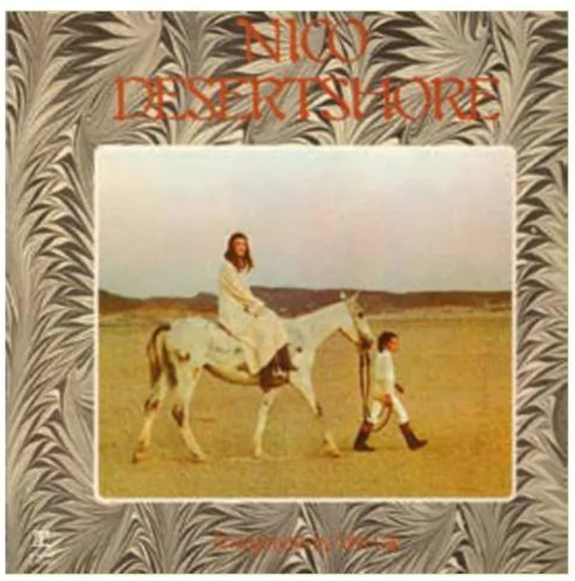
249 CLUSTER & ENO
CLUSTER & ENO
SKY, 1977

Krautrock textures meet futurist atmospherics as an Anglo-German summit produces intoxicating, dreamlike results. Bowie was interested...



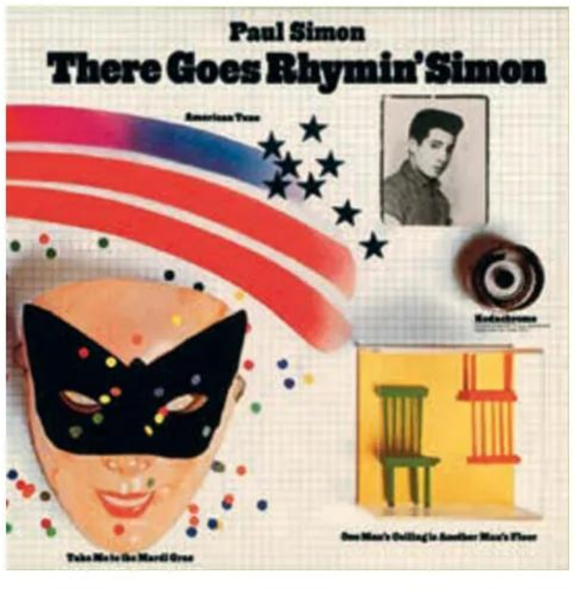
246 FLEETWOOD MAC
FUTURE GAMES
REPRISE, 1971

The band lose Jeremy Spencer to religion, but gain Christine McVie. The journey into folk-rock and progressive pop continues.



245 NICO
DESERTSHORE
ELEKTRA, 1970

Not as oppressive as its predecessor, 1968's *The Marble Index*. Still, this settles down somewhere dark, mysterious, troubled, atavistic. The inescapable burr of Nico's harmonium haunts her gloomy melodies.



242 PAUL SIMON
THERE GOES RHYMIN' SIMON
CBS, 1973

Did anything really change for Paul Simon in the 1970s? As candid as someone so articulate could allow, he remained wise but undamaged. This sparkling second '70s solo effort consolidated Simon's mode – to inhabit a range of styles, and yet still remain himself

241 GROUNDHOGS
THANK CHRIST FOR THE BOMB
LIBERTY, 1970

Tony McPhee's group expand their remit into polemical and searching psych-blues with some memorable tunes. Opener "Strange Town" was covered by The Fall.

240 HAWKWIND
THE SPACE RITUAL ALIVE IN LIVERPOOL AND LONDON
UNITED ARTISTS, 1973

The full cosmic rock live experience, now with multiple fold out Barney Bubbles sleeve: apocalyptic poetry, naked dancers (not audible here) and thunderous new tracks included. "Orgone Accumulator" is your 10-minute brain-fry.

239 JIMI HENDRIX
RAINBOW BRIDGE
REPRISE, 1971

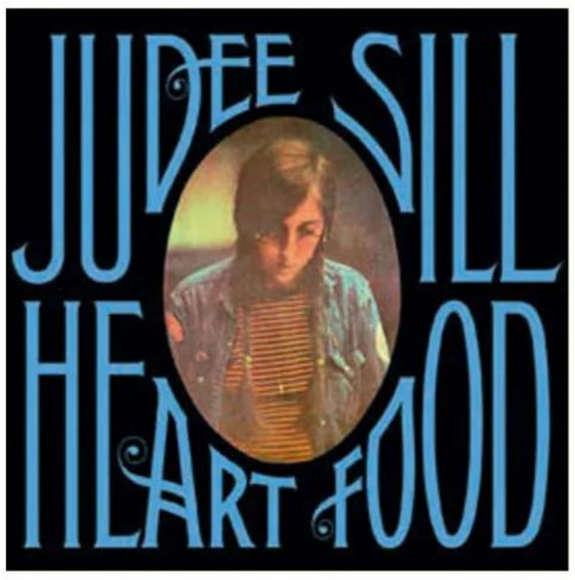
Gone but far from forgotten, Hendrix was a perfectionist in want of an editor – this posthumous release rescues post-Experience vault material intended for unrealised concept pieces. Jagged edges, earth blues and transporting glimpses of a new horizon.

236 SUPERTRAMP
CRIME OF THE CENTURY
A&M, 1974

Breakthrough third album, enabled by the hit single "Dreamer". Themes of loneliness and mental instability permeate several songs.

235 THE JAM
ALL MOD CONS
POLYDOR, 1978

At about the moment he was becoming David Watts for a generation of young mods, Weller covered the Kinks original on an album which seemed to be tilting at concept. The monster single was "Down In The Tube Station At Midnight" but "English Rose" was the real surprise.



232 JUDEE SILL
HEART FOOD
ASYLUM, 1973

A delightful talent, who came unstuck on the flipside of the counterculture. This second album asks us to consider – as the likes of Chris Ethridge provide back-up – how a rawer, more countrified Joni Mitchell might have sounded. Rich, reverend and vulnerable.

231 GANG OF FOUR
ENTERTAINMENT!
EMI, 1979

Marxist dialectic via glass-shard, deftly disciplined rock. One of post-punk's most illuminating, convincing debuts. Huge in America where it inspired groups as diverse as the Chili Peppers and Pavement.

228 THE STRANGLERS
RATTUS NORVEGICUS
UA, 1977

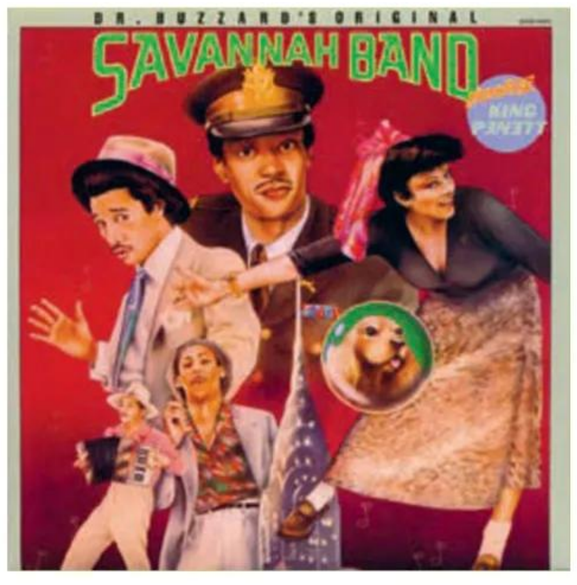
Recorded in a week to capture the band's live set, elements of The Stranglers' debut have aged badly – primarily the domestic violence and beach leering – but its ragged evocation of London's squalid squat-life remains one of punk's most characterful creations.

227 MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA
BETWEEN NOTHINGNESS & ETERNITY...LIVE! CBS, 1973

Jazz-rock-fusion would be a cold trip into the matrix, were it not for the spirituality supplied by John McLaughlin. On this live album, Mahvishnu conjure a mood like incense in a temple. Deep on band interplay, you relish the restraint rather than the solo ferocity.

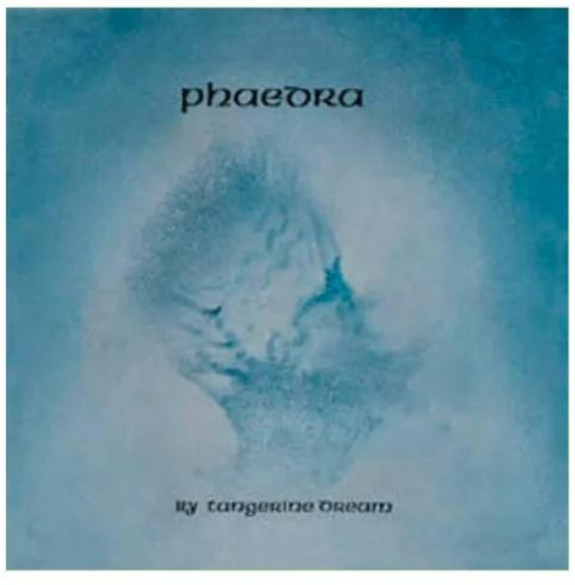
224 JOHN CALE
FEAR
ISLAND, 1974

Like Eno, Cale was equally at home on either side of 1975. This, one of his very best albums, is tough and instinctive but also considered, philosophical, and – with closer "You Know More Than I Know" – writer of ballads, more classic in temperament than he'd care to admit.



223 DR BUZZARD'S ORIGINAL SAVANNAH BAND
DR BUZZARD'S ORIGINAL SAVANNAH BAND MEETS KING PENETT RCA, 1977

August Darnell and Stony Browder Jr were the joint chiefs here, presiding over an intuitive party band – playing an eclectic, calypso-inspired, old-time jazz. Part imagined VJ Day soundtrack, part disco dream trip.



238 TANGERINE DREAM PHAEDRA

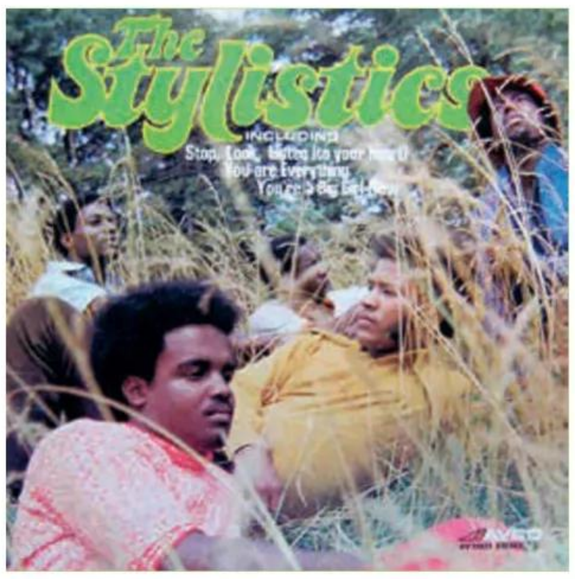
VIRGIN, 1974

A streamlining, of sorts, for album number five, with sequencers to the fore. A hit in the UK, it's the template for modern modular ambient.

237 TIM BUCKLEY GREETINGS FROM LA

STRAIGHT, 1972

"I had to be a hunter again..." An overlooked side of TB, but misguidedly so. Amid the strings, and funk and LA smog, this is a safari of sexual relations. Fruity and slightly paranoid, it's stirring stuff. He'll get himself a reputation.



234 THE STYLISTICS THE STYLISTICS

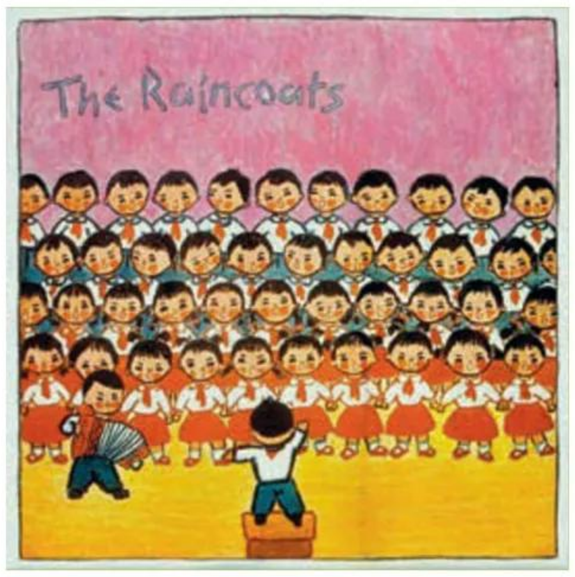
AVCO, 1970

Sweet Philly soul debut featuring the angelic voice of Russell Thompkins, produced by Thom Bell. "Stop, Look, Listen" and "Betcha By Golly Wow" are the standouts, amid stiff competition.

233 KRAFTWERK RADIO-ACTIVITY

CAPITOL, 1975

The second album with the legendary Kraftwerk lineup. Subtle and involving, it's a clever pun: suggesting exciting radio transmissions on one hand, and nuclear emissions on the other. Often overlooked, it's essential bunker listening.



230 THE RAINCOATS THE RAINCOATS

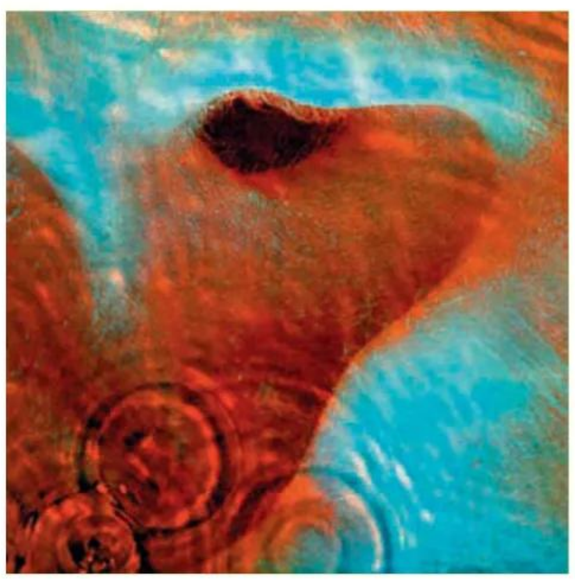
ROUGH TRADE, 1979

One of Kurt Cobain's favourite albums, and it's easy to see why. Rawness, tunes and interesting textures all working together, this rickety, violin-inflected debut offers a defiantly DIY, proto-Riot Grrrl take on post-punk.

229 LEE HAZLEWOOD REQUIEM FOR AN ALMOST LADY

VIKING, 1971

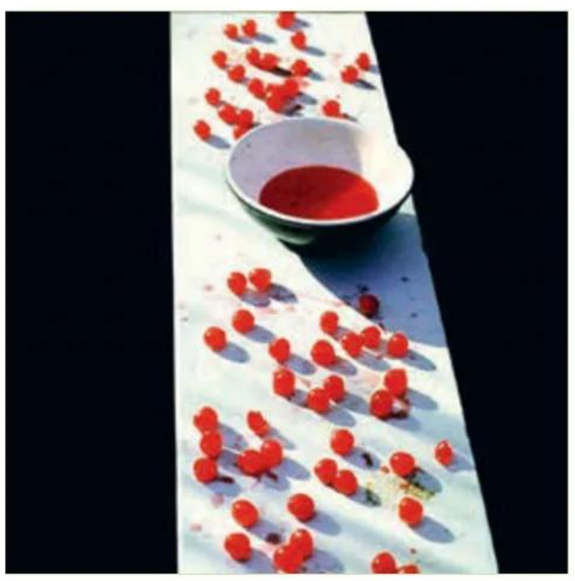
To all the girls I've loved before... here, my dears. Hazlewood pours out his romantic past and no-one is spared – the author included.



226 PINK FLOYD MEDDLE

HARVEST, 1971

Eureka! With a sound like a sonar ping, Pink Floyd finally write the script for their future. The sidelong "Echoes" – by turns funky, pacific, and with lovely singing – is the very best of what the band's next five years would offer. "One Of These Days" is a proper jam too.



225 PAUL McCARTNEY McCARTNEY

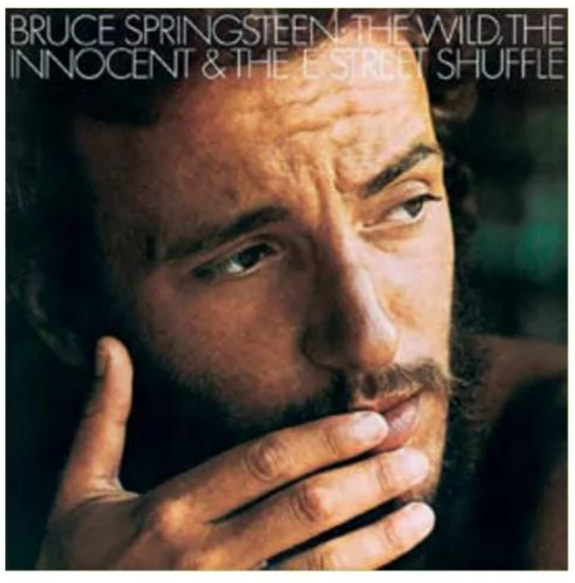
APPLE, 1970

Its release date was the subject of white-hot debate among those Beatles, but here, retreating from their world and its dramas, McCartney creates his own space. It's just the two of them, Paul and his creativity vibing off each other and hoping for the best.

222 IAN HUNTER ALL AMERICAN ALIEN BOY

COLUMBIA, 1976

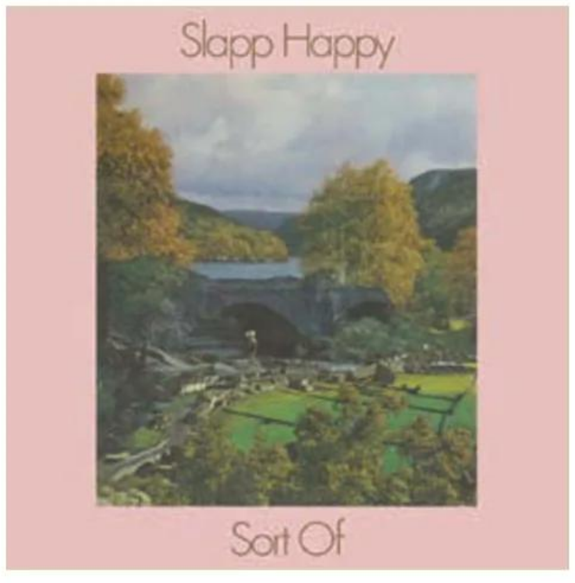
Ian Hunter (*"a whitey from Blighty"*) had the taste and talent to withstand fashion. His mode the wry and melodically surprising anthem, here he brought on Jaco Patorious, sax, soulful backing vocalists, even Queen, all without sacrificing his customary charisma and grit.



221 BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN THE WILD, THE INNOCENT & THE E STREET SHUFFLE

COLUMBIA, 1973

Growing in confidence, accompanied by four musicians who would form the nucleus of the future E Street Band. "Rosalita" and "Incident On 57th Street" are key texts.



220 SLAPP HAPPY
SORT OF
POLYDOR, 1972

Debut by the German-English avant-garde pop outfit led by Peter Blegvad. Freak-folk meets musique concrète, but tunefully so.

219 THE BEE GEES AND VARIOUS ARTISTS
SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
BGO, 1977

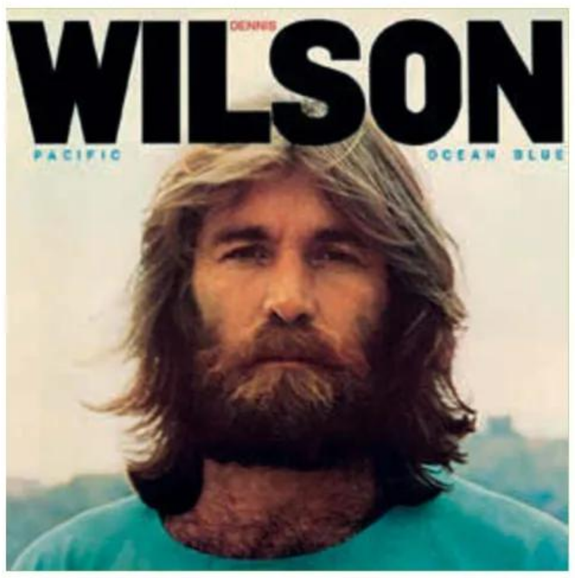
Disco sucks? Four sides to soundtrack an agreeably gritty film, or to stir the most conservative elements of society into action. Which side are you on? The brothers Gibb lead the four-on-the-floor strut as disco prepares to conquer the world.

216 JOHN LENNON
IMAGINE
APPLE, 1971

Perceived as a sell-out after the primal screams of the previous year, *Imagine* found Lennon having his cake and eating it. With his own crew, on his own terms, he returned to the public eye, proposing peace and personal growth – all while putting the boot into Paul McCartney.

215 THE SAINTS
ETERNALLY YOURS
HARVEST, 1978

Hard-swinging punk rock from Australia, proving that "I'm Stranded" wasn't the end of it. This second album – witty, swaggering, fat of sound – illustrates the depth of what Chris Bailey and Ed Kuepper had to offer, as well as just the speed.

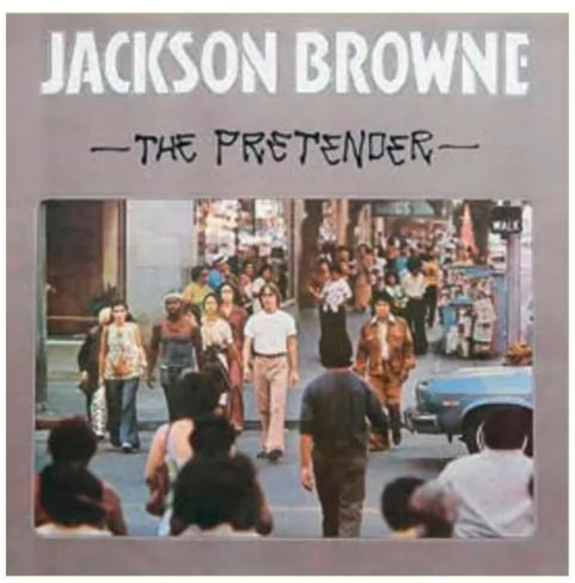


212 DENNIS WILSON
PACIFIC OCEAN BLUE
CARIBOU, 1977

Dennis had helped out on minor Beach Boys albums like *Carl And The Passions – "So Tough"*, where his solid melodic gifts were a welcome addition to the pot. This tender solo effort isn't quite a masterpiece, but it is for sure an overlooked soft rock giant.

211 RENAISSANCE
SCHEHEREZADE AND OTHER STORIES
BTM, 1975

Progressive rock rife with classical quotation. "Trip To The Fair" helps to explain some of the band's charm: Annie Haslam's vocal is pure folky commitment, and the band's proficiency manifests generally in a pastoral swing rather than hard-charging fugues.



208 JACKSON BROWNE
THE PRETENDER
ASYLUM, 1976

Singer-songwriter Browne's introspective fourth album. It was informed by both the suicide of his wife ("Here Come Those Tears Again") and the rise of the yuppie (the title track).

207 HERBIE HANCOCK
SEXTANT
COLUMBIA, 1973

Jazz figurehead's first for a new label, and last with the band he'd fronted for four years. Comprises three extended improvisations, while his seafaring themes drifted along in the background.

204 THE CONGOS
HEART OF THE CONGOS
BLACK ARK, 1977

Might this be the very finest album of vocal reggae? Produced by Lee "Scratch" Perry, the duo of Cedric Myton and Roy "Ashanti" Johnson are assisted by the cream of Jamaica's session men.

203 ORNETTE COLEMAN
DANCING IN YOUR HEAD
HORIZON, 1977

Jazz innovator and his band Prime Time explore indigenous Moroccan music. Includes field recordings with the Master Musicians of Joujouka. Hard one to find these days, but definitely worth it.

218 RAMONES
LEAVE HOME
SIRE, 1977

It ain't broke, it ain't getting fixed. More where their debut came from, but faster, tighter and better produced. Dee Dee Ramone's pop nous in the grips of a challenging lifestyle is still something to marvel at.

217 TOM ROBINSON BAND
POWER IN THE DARKNESS
EMI, 1978

Relatable new wave you could take home to meet the folks. TRB's studenty appearance and sparky hooks were never going to turn the heads of the Costello purist, but this debut gave pause. Robinson was a right guy who knew something about the mood of a record.

214 TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS
TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS
SHELTER, 1976

Enter a heartland rock icon, armed with Byrdsian harmonies, simple, energetic songwriting and Stonesy attitude.

213 THE CURE
THREE IMAGINARY BOYS
FICTION, 1979

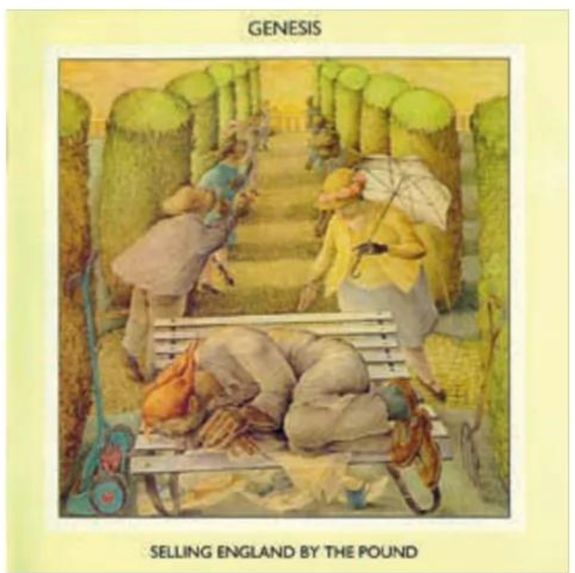
No dry ice! The Crawley trio's skewed worldview is blueprinted on a debut full of sulky but sharp and inventive post-punk pop.

210 AL GREEN
LET'S STAY TOGETHER
HI, 1972

The title track gave Green his only US chart-topper, and the album also includes his celebrated version of the Bee Gees' "How Can You Mend A Broken Heart?".

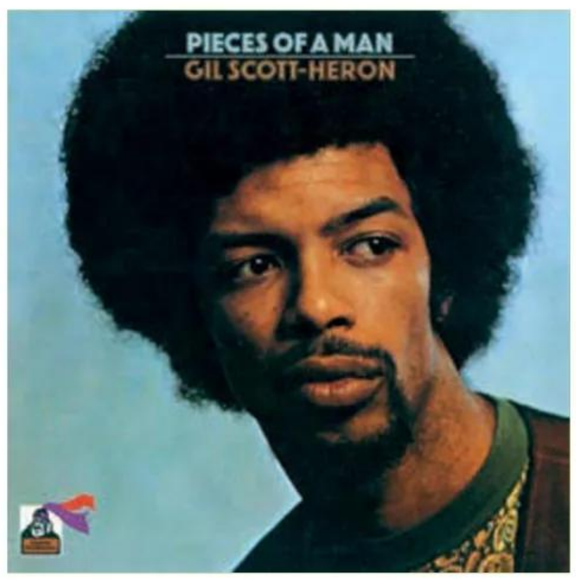
209 SLY & THE FAMILY STONE
FRESH
EPIC, 1973

Lighter in tone than its predecessor and more heavily reliant on drum machines. Includes the band's only cover, Doris Day's signature song "Que Sera Sera".



206 GENESIS
SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND
CHARISMA, 1973

A concept album of sorts, lamenting the decline of English culture and the rise of American influences. "I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)" gave the group an unlikely Top 30 hit, while in the throes of longer pieces.

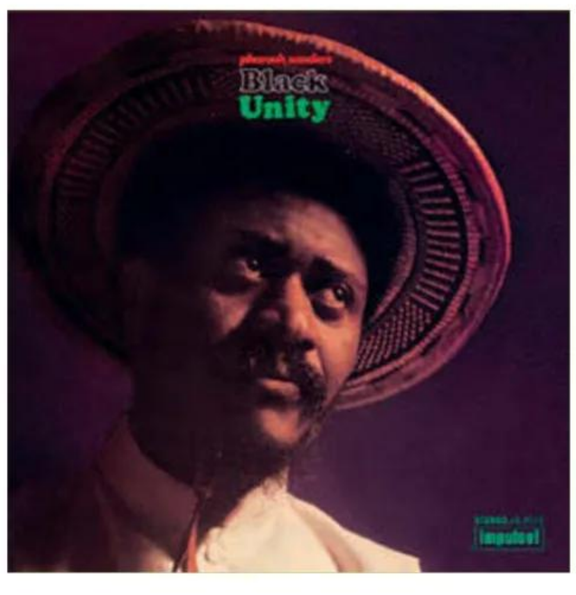


205 GIL SCOTT-HERON
PIECES OF A MAN
FLYING DUTCHMAN, 1971

The performance poet adds jazz-infused, funky musical accompaniment to his piercing words. A world of possibilities opens up.

202 JONI MITCHELL
COURT AND SPARK
ASYLUM, 1974

The oft-cited "jazz influence" here doesn't completely nail it. Still, with the sympathetic skills of Tom Scott's LA Express alongside her, *Court...* helps Joni stake a claim on sophisticated mid-'70s album pop: sumptuous sound, complex arrangements, very strong chops.



201 PHAROAH SANDERS
BLACK UNITY
IMPULSE!, 1971

One hypnotic 37-minute groove. Stanley Clarke and company keep it tight on a riff that sounds like it could come from a Led Zeppelin record, while Pharoah and company hit the free blowing. Thrilling, carpet-level recordings

200 VASHTI BUNYAN
JUST ANOTHER DIAMOND DAY

PHILIPS, 1970

Where a pop ingénue trades the patronage of Andrew Loog Oldham for a horse and cart, travels the countryside, and makes exquisite, lamp-lit folk miniatures. A madly valuable record, in every sense.

199 GEORGE JONES
THE GRAND TOUR

EPIC, 1974

An album all but overshadowed by its title song, whose melancholy, rueful reflection on divorce can seem, at times, too much to bear; Jones at his best. It brought him back into public view; this album consolidated a career upswing.

196 ROBERTA FLACK & DONNY HATHAWAY
ROBERTA FLACK & DONNY HATHAWAY

ATLANTIC, 1972

Two soul legends get together in part to boost their careers, but the artistry of this collection is heaven sent, and the song selection – Carole King's "You've Got A Friend"; a heartbreaking "You've Lost That Loving Feeling" – is well considered.

195 LITTLE FEAT
DIXIE CHICKEN

WARNER BROS, 1973

The third album by Lowell George's wrecked crew, Dixie Chicken is the point where Little Feat's gumbo fell together, their generic profligacy in full flight, steamed in the Los Angeles humidity. The title track was their first widely recognised classic.

192 MAGAZINE
REAL LIFE

VIRGIN, 1978

Post-punk figureheads' debut. Includes "Shot By Both Sides", co-written by frontman Howard Devoto's old Buzzcocks sparring partner Pete Shelley. See their perkier "Lipstick" for details.

191 FUNKADELIC
ONE NATION UNDER A GROOVE

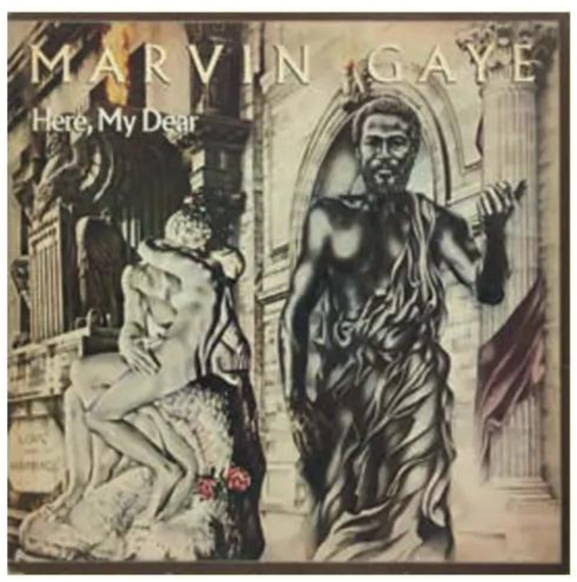
WARNER BROS, 1978

George Clinton's retinue on fantastically funky, frazzled form; extended workouts that blast the groove into outer space.

188 AC/DC
IF YOU WANT BLOOD YOU'VE GOT IT

ATLANTIC, 1978

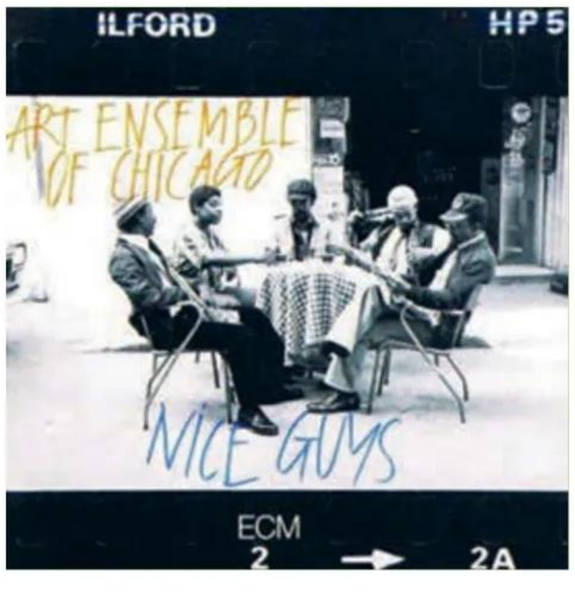
"ANGUS! ANGUS!" An unrelenting but still-swinging set from a homecoming Glasgow show. *If You Want Blood* gets in quick, burns rubber through 10 songs, and leaves before you can catch your breath. "Bad Boy Boogie" stands especially tall.



187 MARVIN GAYE
HERE, MY DEAR

TAMLA, 1978

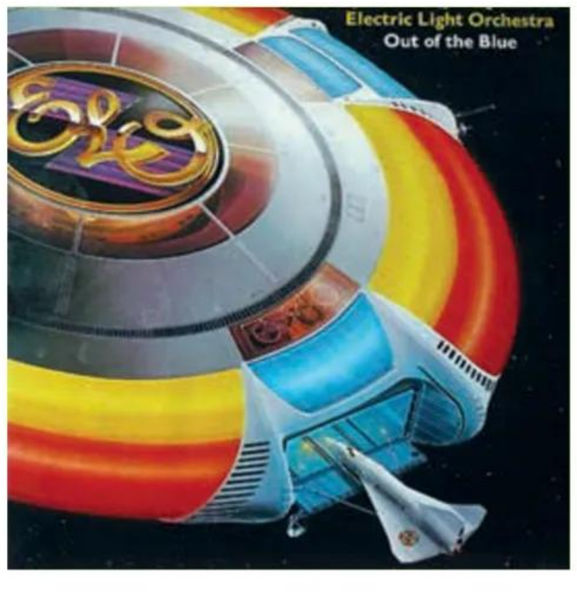
Maybe the most infamous divorce album there is, here Gaye lays it out for all to hear on an extended, heart-breaking wipe-out double.



184 THE ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO
NICE GUYS

ECM, 1979

For their first set on ECM, the Art Ensemble go for space and accessibility – it's a lovely, inviting set that doesn't shake down their avant-garde jazz sensibilities, but gives their music a crystalline production, letting the instrumental play shine brightly.



183 ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA
OUT OF THE BLUE

JET, 1977

Jeff Lynne goes from strength to strength. Bee Gee strut, Beach Boy harmonies and Beatle tunefulness seep into a masterful, hit-filled double album.

198 VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR STILL LIFE

CHARISMA, 1976

Weighty themes of mortality inform a captivating post-prog psychodrama. Rarely does navel-gazing sound this gripping.

197 THE FALL DRAGNET

STEP FORWARD, 1979

"Shhh! We are private detectives onward back from a musical pilgrimage..." Despite (because of?) the dankness of the lo-fi production, Smith and his company make creepy reportage from their take on the present day.

194 ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA A NEW WORLD RECORD

JET, 1976

The classical pop template is polished to a shimmer. Jeff Lynne's symphonic rock vision strikes a sumptuous chord.

193 CURTIS MAYFIELD THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE AMERICA TODAY

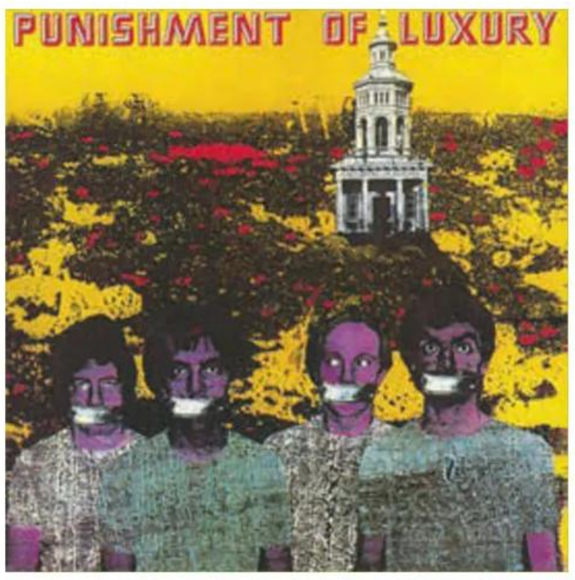
CURTOM, 1975

One of Mayfield's most sombre releases, an examination of poverty and political unrest in "Billy Jack", "When Seasons Change" and "Hard Times".

190 THE KINKS MUSWELL HILLBILLIES

RCA, 1971

Ray Davies' loose concept album populated by characters based in the North London streets where he and brother Dave grew up. Ironically fared better in the US.



189 PUNISHMENT OF LUXURY LAUGHING ACADEMY

UNITED ARTISTS, 1979

Theatrical Geordie futurists bring plenty of warped pop hooks to underpin their dystopian synth-punk.

186 GENESIS A TRICK OF THE TAIL

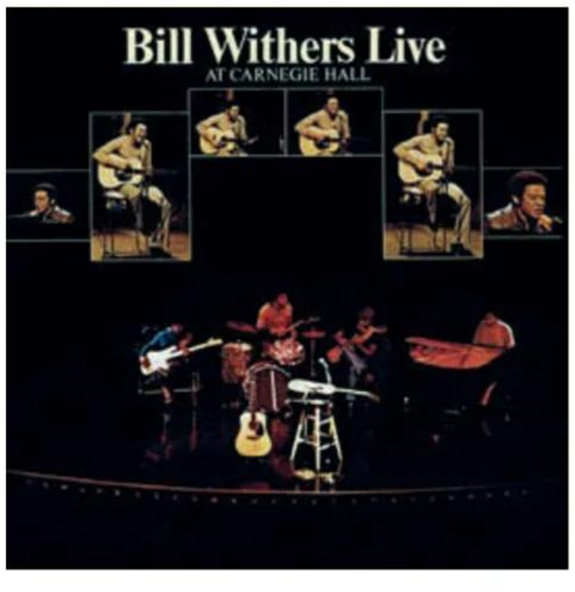
CHARISMA, 1975

Peter Gabriel's gone, and with him much playfulness and whimsy, but *Trick* is still grounded in what made Genesis special. Here their high-class musical interplay remains cut through with deft melodicism.

185 AEROSMITH TOYS IN THE ATTIC

COLUMBIA, 1975

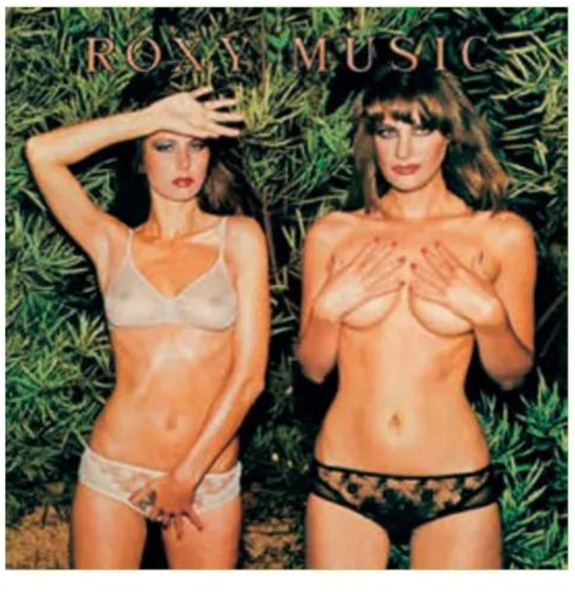
The best of the New Hampshire boys' early run, with "Walk This Way" and "Sweet Emotion" lighting up thousands of classic rock stations.



182 BILL WITHERS LIVE AT CARNEGIE HALL

SUSSEX, 1973

A great set of songs from one of the most consistently underrated soul singer songwriters of his time. *Live At Carnegie Hall* has Withers delivering his material with grace and acuity; lovely songs of longing and reflection, always sadly beautiful.



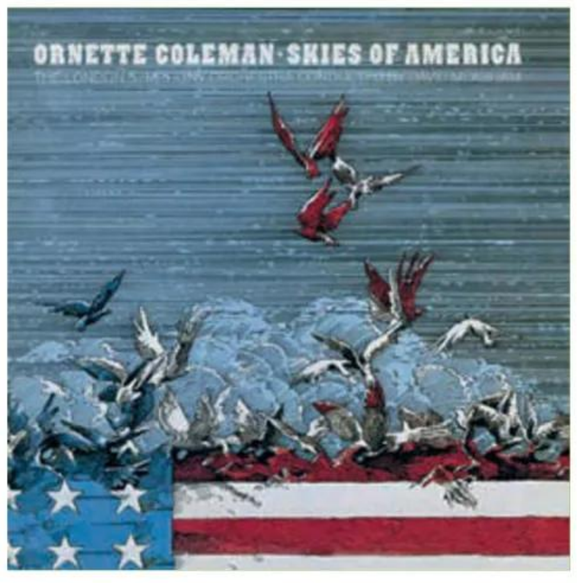
181 ROXY MUSIC COUNTRY LIFE

ISLAND, 1974

No Roxy Music album from this era is 'understated', but there's something to the melancholy of songs like "All I Want Is You" that makes *Country Life* one of their most reflective sets; the music's eclectic, the songs are blue.

180 UNDERTONES
UNDERTONES
SIRE, 1979

Punk may be maturing, but these reminders of its adolescent pop fundamentals are utterly irresistible. The original debut was rereleased later in the year with the added majesty of "Teenage Kicks", "Jimmy Jimmy" and "Here Comes The Summer".



179 ORNETTE COLEMAN
SKIES OF AMERICA
CBS, 1972

The master of harmolodics, and one of free jazz's principal architects, steers an orchestra through a frequently stunning composition. Their playing is a bit stiff, but Coleman's vision shines throughout, and his own soloing is heartrending in its beauty.

176 THE JAM
SETTING SONS
POLYDOR, 1979

Album number four for The Jam has the mod trio baring all their teeth – it's a tough, unrelenting set, highlighted by the penultimate track and iconic single, "Eton Rifles". Weller is laser focused throughout.

175 WAYLON JENNINGS
HONKY TONK HEROES
RCA, 1973

A key album in the history of outlaw country, on *Honky Tonk Heroes* Jennings and his Waylors grab hold of the everyday poetry of Billy Joe Shaver's songs and squeeze every drop of emotion from them; it's a dream connection.

172 WIRE
154
HARVEST, 1979

We're a long way from the Roxy now. The climate's still cold, but the views are getting more widescreen. The sound effects might be futuristic, but the likes of "Map Ref" meant Wire had never been more relatable.

171 SISTER SLEDGE
WE ARE FAMILY
COTILLON, 1979

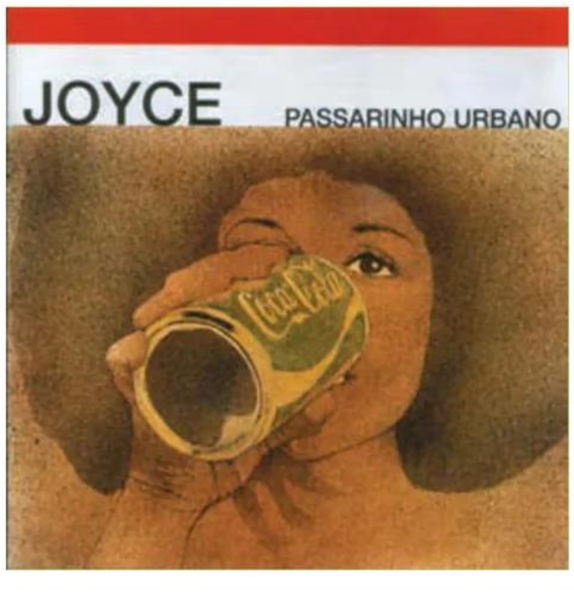
It's not quite Chic under another name, though Rodgers and Edwards do produce *We Are Family*. Sister Sledge bring plenty of joie de vivre to these songs; the title track is an endless pirouette on the dancefloor, voices united.

168 JACKSON BROWNE
LATE FOR THE SKY
ASYLUM, 1974

Old before his time, Jackson sumptuously paints his feelings. Harmonious and super-smooth for all the confessional content.

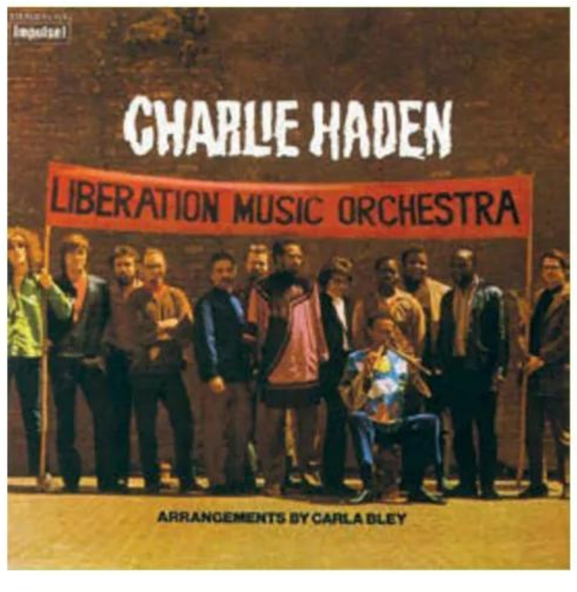
167 MARVIN GAYE
I WANT YOU
TAMLA, 1976

A tight collaboration with Leon Ware, *I Want You* marks a seachange for Gaye. A steamy, sweaty R&B reverie, the sex and intimacy are core to the groove.



164 JOYCE
PASSARINHO URBANO
CENTRA, 1976

One of Brazilian music's greats, with *Passarinho Urbano* Joyce Moreno sang the bossa and MPB songs of her history and her peers. The minimal production allows her jaw-dropping guitar skills full flight.



163 CHARLIE HADEN
LIBERATION MUSIC ORCHESTRA
IMPULSE!, 1970

Jazz bassist and bandleader Haden's idiosyncratic protest album. Warm-hearted collective playing on songs from the Spanish Civil War and Ornette Coleman's "War Orphans".

178 FRIPP/ENO
NO PUSSYFOOTING
ISLAND, 1973

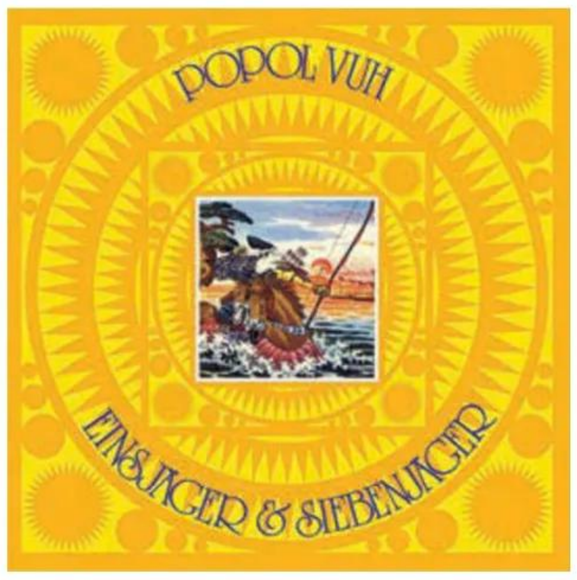
An evening jam session births a sonic blueprint that would reverberate for decades. Eno launches the synths to cruising altitude, while Fripp fires off laser glissandi to the future. A sound warm, modern and very strange

177 GROUNDHOGS
SPLIT
LIBERTY, 1971

Dynamic guitar jams inspiring to Pavement's Steve Malkmus and other Gen X heads, all shaped by Tony McPhee's vernacular songwriting. In part inspired by a panic attack experienced eating an Indian takeaway, while stoned. Your move, Graham Nash.

174 ULTRAVOX
HA!-HA!-HA!
ISLAND, 1977

Well before the clotted cream that was "Vienna", Ultravox were on a deeper, darker trip. On this, their second set, John Foxx's eschatological vision was in full force, the electronics were both brittle and fierce, and their Euro mystery undimmed.



173 POPOL VUH
EINSJÄGER UND SIEBENJÄGER
KOSMISCHE MUSIK, 1975

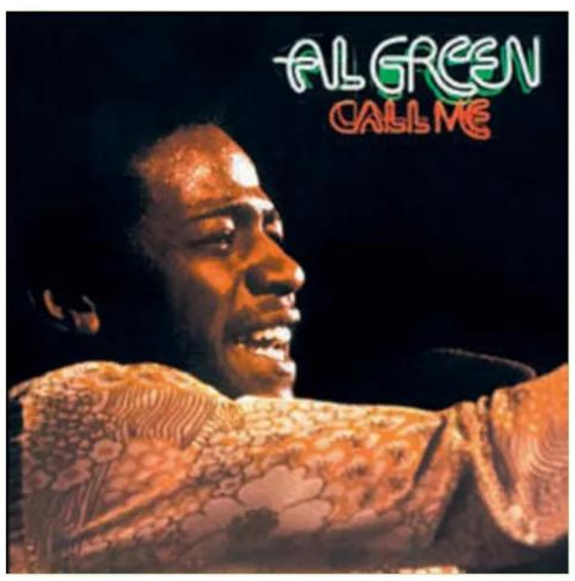
Few people have milked one idea quite as effectively, and movingly, as Florian Fricke, and *Einsjäger Und Siebenjäger* takes beautiful, hymnal guitar reels and lets them unspool, gently, while the band plays, quietly, repetitively, a chiming, lilting groove. Pure bliss.

170 FLEETWOOD MAC
TUSK
WARNER BROS, 1979

After the huge success of *Rumours*, why not shoot your collective self in the foot with one of rock's most engorged excesses? But hidden in *Tusk*'s four sides are some of the Mac's most vulnerable and risky performances; bravura stuff.

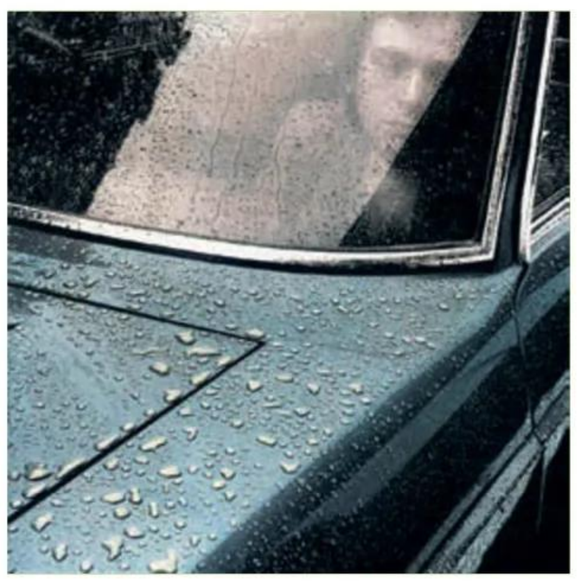
169 THIS HEAT
THIS HEAT
PIANO, 1979

The missing link between whimsical Canterbury prog and post-punk abstraction. Charles Hayward, Gareth Williams and Charles Bullen create an eerie set of strange grooves hurtling towards a quirky doom: "*I know all about cats and their heavy vibes*".



166 AL GREEN
CALL ME
HI, 1973

Even after a strong run, Green's sixth album is his masterpiece. His soul makeovers of country classics by Hank Williams and Willie Nelson are extraordinary.



165 PETER GABRIEL
PETER GABRIEL
CHARISMA, 1977

Freed from Genesis, Gabriel landed Bob Ezrin as producer and opened his purview considerably. Features one bona fide classic in "Solsbury Hill", plus plenty of understated gems, enlivened by Tony Levin and Robert Fripp.

162 JOHN PRINE
JOHN PRINE
ATLANTIC, 1971

This debut may trade on its songs' downhome, finger-picking country charm, but it's full of black humour and tender perception. An original voice begins to emerge.

161 THE ONLY ONES
EVEN SERPENTS SHINE
COLUMBIA, 1979

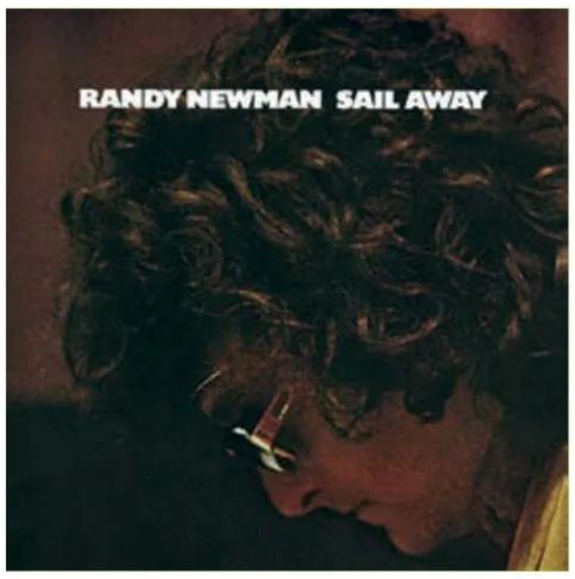
Peter Perrett and co's most cohesive release, the sound fleshed out by keyboards courtesy of Who collaborator John "Rabbit" Bundrick.

160 CHIP TAYLOR
CHIP TAYLOR'S LAST CHANCE
WARNER BROS, 1973

Best known as a writer – the master behind "Wild Thing" and "Angel of the Morning" – on *Last Chance*, Taylor proves his mettle as an artist, too. This gorgeous, laidback country rock is free of braggadocio, the songs carefully, deftly sculpted.

159 SUPERTRAMP
BREAKFAST IN AMERICA
A&M, 1979

Take a look at their girlfriend? Take a look at their US sales! Heavy on the Wurlitzer and high on States-gazing hits, *Breakfast...* was Supertramp's global smash, awash with infectious AOR pop such as "The Logical Song" and "Take The Long Way Home".

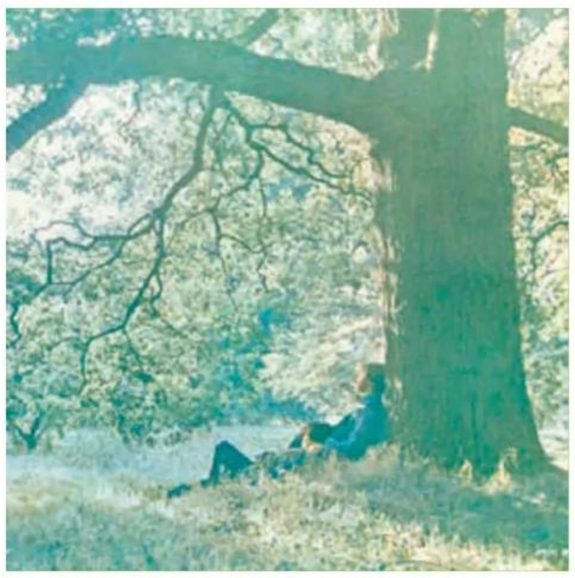


156 RANDY NEWMAN
SAIL AWAY
REPRISE, 1972

This one feels more expansive, somehow. Features some of Newman's most mordantly funny songwriting – family, politics, relationships, character portraits. Nothing's safe from his pen.

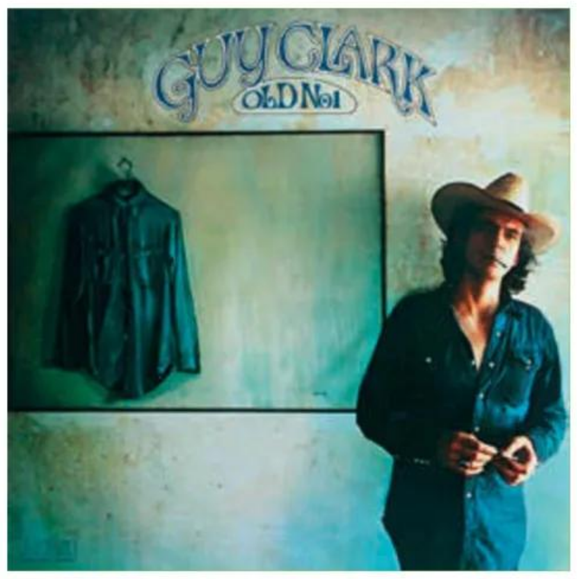
155 PINK FLOYD
THE WALL
HARVEST, 1979

Roger Waters wrests full control of the Floyd beast for this scathing indictment of the fame machine and the music industry. It's too long, and lacks reflexive candour, but conceptually it's spot-on – a brutal indictment of fame's inescapable, tar-black neuroses.



152 YOKO ONO
YOKO ONO/ PLASTIC ONO BAND
APPLE, 1970

Ono's avant-garde debut is still as bristling and thrilling as when it was released, over half a century ago – her vocal scream technique, a powerful projection into walls of rock'n'roll amplification, meets some of Lennon's most unhinged, exciting, overloaded guitar.



151 GUY CLARK
OLD NO 1
RCA VICTOR, 1975

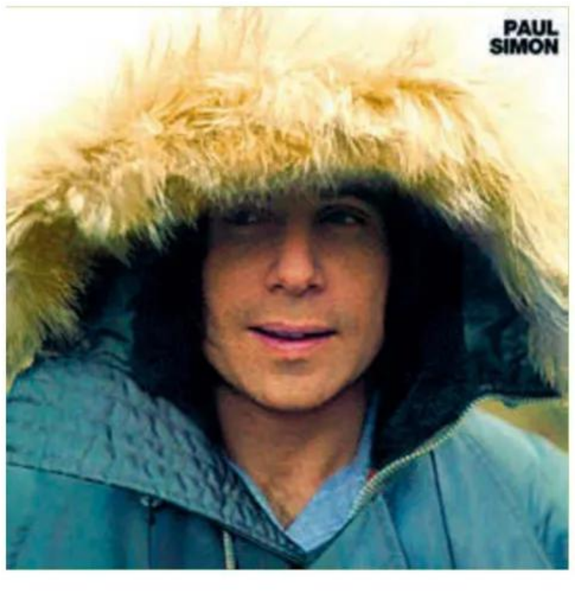
Guy Clark's debut is both classic outlaw country, and something far beyond that generic stamp. Heartbreaking: renders emotional complexity in simple terms. Every song catches you unawares in its observational candour. Deep perfection.

148 AC/DC
HIGHWAY TO HELL
ATLANTIC, 1979

The last album that Bon Scott recorded with AC/DC is also one of their best. AC/DC do straightforward as default, but *Highway To Hell*'s 10 songs are bullets straight to the heart of mercenary rock'n'roll legend. A disciplined way to sound out of control.

147 ELTON JOHN
GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD
DJM, 1973

If you want to have a hit, then go big – that was Elton John's modus operandi when he wrote this album. Some of the songs have become part of common language, but there are plenty of other gems concealed here.



144 PAUL SIMON
PAUL SIMON
COLUMBIA, 1972

Finally, this is me. But which one was the post-Garfunkel Simon? The reggae fan? Or the introspective composer of "Duncan" and "Peace Like A River"?

143 THE ONLY ONES
THE ONLY ONES
COLUMBIA, 1978

Debut by Peter Perrett's ramshackle power-pop punks, featuring the classic "Another Girl, Another Planet" and fan favourite "No Peace For The Wicked".

158 CURTIS MAYFIELD
BACK TO THE WORLD
BUDDAH, 1973

After the success of *Superfly*, Mayfield was emboldened; the immediate result was this lovely, luscious album of laidback soul and R&B. There are few voices as sensuous as Mayfield's; here it combines with elevated songwriting in a gorgeous song suite.

157 STEELY DAN
THE ROYAL SCAM
ABC, 1976

No, it's not just home to "Haitian Divorce" and "Kid Charlemagne", though you'd be forgiven for thinking so. But *The Royal Scam* is where Fagen and Becker's cynicism and sarcasm takes full control of their art; dense, cryptic, and dark.

154 RAMONES
ROCKET TO RUSSIA
SIRE, 1977

Fresh injections of humour, bubblegum pop and surf twang give the sound a subtle tweak – with even sharper hooks.

153 JAPAN
QUIET LIFE
ARIOLA HANSA, 1979

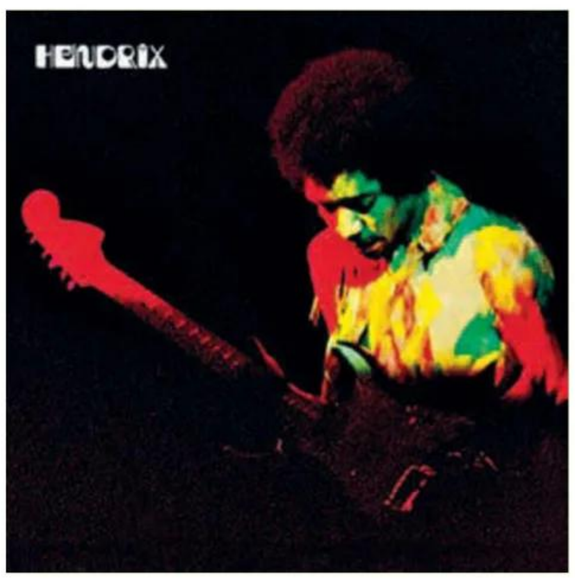
A weird, mid-career-change album from David Sylvian's glam outcasts, not yet refined and poised, its disco-fied synth-pop still miles away from the New York Dolls poses of their debut.

150 FRANÇOISE HARDY
LA QUESTION
SONOPRESS, 1971

Sparse production and subtle bossa nova motifs, courtesy of Brazilian arranger and guitarist Tuca. Themes of anxiety, eroticism and fear abound.

149 MILES DAVIS
A TRIBUTE TO JACK JOHNSON
COLUMBIA, 1971

A rock backbeat and a funky feel sets the platform. Miles and John McLaughlin spring forth on breathtaking instrumental flights of fancy.



146 JIMI HENDRIX
BAND OF GYPSYS
CAPITOL, 1970

Miles Davis is in the audience for these turn-of the decade live shows. "Machine Gun" proves there was more to Hendrix than the original Experience, though Buddy Miles could maybe have dialled back the chit-chat.

145 KEVIN AYERS
WHATEVERSHE-BRINGSWESING
HARVEST, 1971

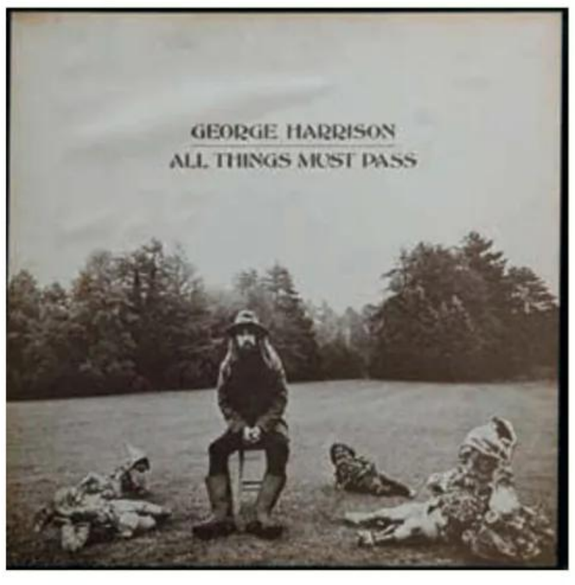
A lot of charm, and considerable style. The underground's primo roué hints at the hidden depths beyond his delightful shallows.

142 BOB DYLAN
DESIRE
CBS, 1976

Dylan spits fire and brimstone here on "Isis" and "Hurricane", the startling double-shot opener that all but overshadows what comes next. It's a weird, unwieldy document, hard to get a true measure of, but one of Dylan's most genuine experiments.

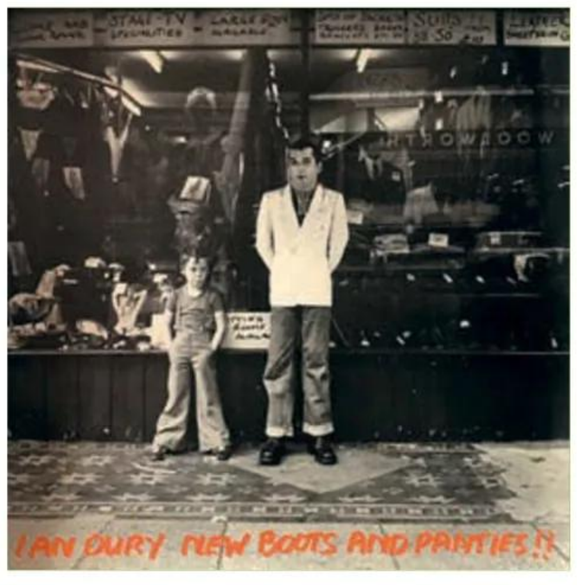
141 ARETHA FRANKLIN
AMAZING GRACE
ATLANTIC, 1972

Franklin recorded many incredible sides, but few are quite as devastating as *Amazing Grace*, where she returned to the music embedded deep inside – gospel – and delivered it with such obliterating force, it's exhausting to listen through in one go. Sublime.



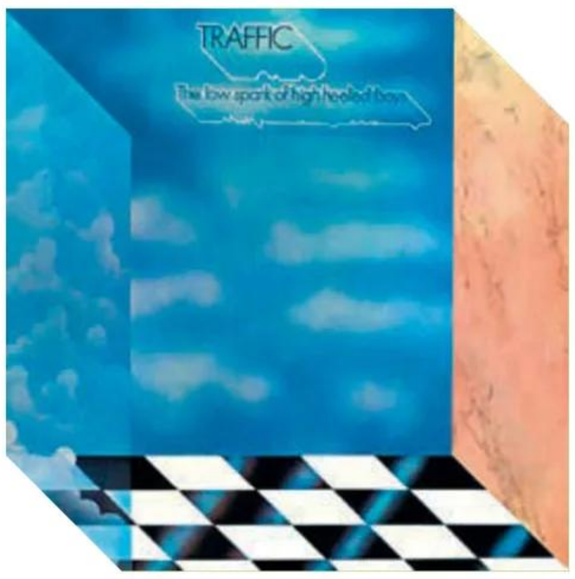
140 GEORGE HARRISON
ALL THINGS MUST PASS
APPLE, 1970

Freed from The Beatles, still carrying that weight, George delivers a shaggy collection which shows he was never just Lennon/McCartney's junior partner. Pals Spector and Clapton came too, as did a lot of other folks besides.



139 IAN DURY
NEW BOOTS AND PANTIES!!
STIFF, 1977

Dury's debut is a stranger concoction than you might remember. It can never quite decide what it wants to be – weird punk? Scabrous R&B? Lopsided disco? – which is part of its genius; Dury's real-world, droll lyrics perfectly complement.



136 TRAFFIC
THE LOW SPARK OF HIGH-HEELED BOYS
ISLAND, 1971

An expanded lineup gave Traffic greater flexibility, best exemplified in the title song here, a 12-minute sprawl, the best showcase for Traffic's growing jazz-rock tendencies. Steve Winwood still very much the star this crew sails by, though.

135 THE WHO
WHO'S NEXT
TRACK, 1971

It took a lot of 'Lifehouse' to get there, but The Who really nailed it with *Who's Next*. From the minimalism-informed "Baba O'Riley" through "Bargain" and "Won't Get Fooled Again" – every song's a classic. Even The Ox is on form.

132 TALKING HEADS
MORE SONGS ABOUT BUILDINGS AND FOOD
SIRE, 1978

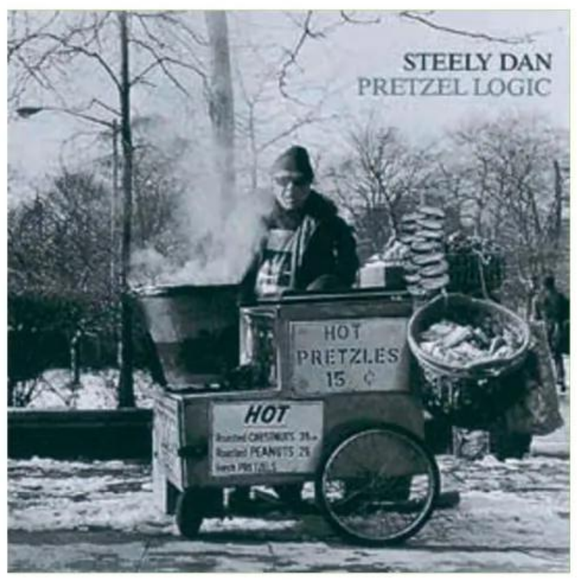
Eno arrives on the scene, bringing more danceable, quasi-disco beats to the Talking Heads party. Cue their only major '70s hit with a cover of Al Green's "Take Me To The River".

131 DION
BORN TO BE WITH YOU
PSI, 1975

The doo-wop pin-up is thrown a lifeline by a wayward Phil Spector. Eight pieces of slow, wistful majesty result.

128 THE SAINTS
(I'M) STRANDED
HARVEST, 1977

Alienated in their hometown Brisbane, Australia, The Saints were the exact point where MC5/Stooges sludge met the incipient punk movement – with the title song, The Saints invented the form. It's true: they did it first.



127 STEELY DAN
PRETZEL LOGIC
ABC, 1973

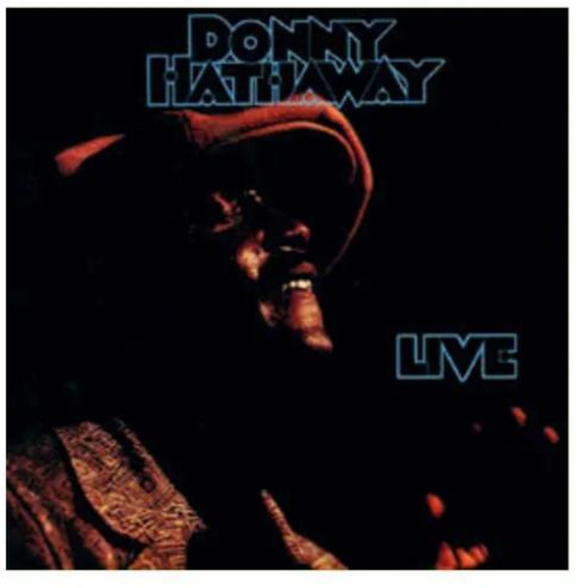
Further explorations of jazz figures in a pop idiom, best heard on the hit single "Rikki Don't Lose That Number" and "Any Major Dude Will Tell You".

124 THE ROLLING STONES
SOME GIRLS
ROLLING STONES, 1978

Now this is more like it. An intensely productive phase for the Stones, and the start of their embrace of disco, with the irresistible "Miss You". Good to have them back in full force.

123 LAURA NYRO AND LABELLE
GONNA TAKE A MIRACLE
COLUMBIA, 1971

Gamble and Huff pilot Nyro, the accomplished songwriter, through an album of covers. Nyro's vocal power is complemented by Labelle, as they pay homage to the Doo-wop hits of her New York youth. Are you ready?



138 DONNY HATHAWAY LIVE

ATLANTIC, 1972

Hathaway stretches his songs out in one constantly unfolding languorous swoon on *Live*, one of his best efforts. The fluidity of the musicianship here is lush, all the better to embrace Hathaway's slowly uncoiling melodies; a long, slow soul simmer.

137 KRAFTWERK AUTOBAHN

VERTIGO, 1974

The side-long title track gets all the attention, and rightly so, its evocation of Europe endless as undeniable as its childlike chant – *"fahren, fahren, fahren auf der Autobahn"*. But the glissando electronica of "Kometenmelodie" is wildly charming, too. Playfully psychedelic.

134 ROXY MUSIC STRANDED

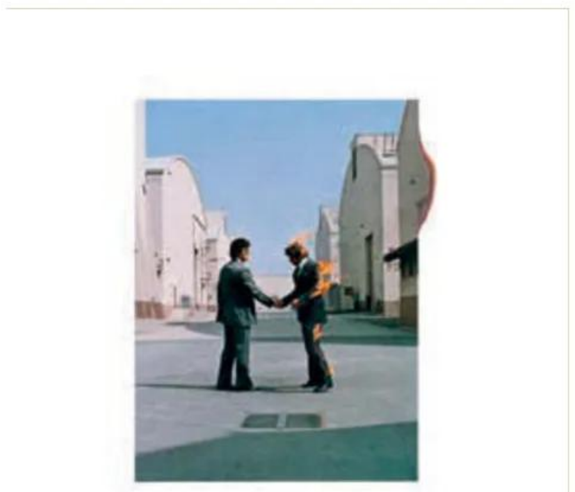
ISLAND, 1973

Their first album after Eno left featured some of their greatest songs, including the career-defining "Mother Of Pearl". What it lacked for losing the group's electronics boffin, it gained in focus and verve – streamlined, but still sexy, experimental and stylish.

133 AL GREEN I'M STILL IN LOVE WITH YOU

HI, 1972

Spawned four hit singles, its seven Green originals are augmented by covers of Kris Kristofferson ("For The Good Times") and Roy Orbison ("Oh, Pretty Woman").



130 PINK FLOYD WISH YOU WERE HERE

HARVEST, 1975

What a way to follow *The Dark Side Of The Moon* – a dejected, downbeat reflection, partly paying tribute to ex-member Syd Barrett, partly a more general takedown of music industry mores. It's exhausting in its checked fury, and messily dark.

129 ROY HARPER STORMCOCK

HARVEST, 1971

Jimmy Page guests on this shaggy acoustic epic. Eccentric as ever but vocal in his non-conformism, Harper's conviction – and the tunes – shines through. Hats off to Harper, indeed!

126 LED ZEPPELIN PHYSICAL GRAFFITI

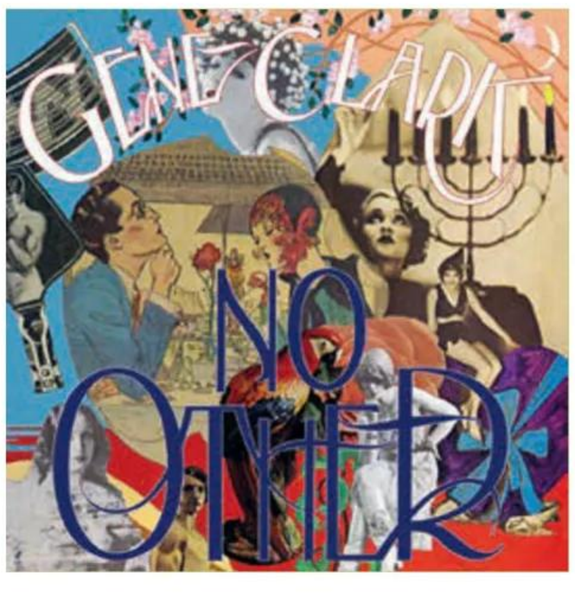
SWAN SONG, 1975

Just out of their imperial phase, maybe, but Zep were stil voraciously creative, and for "Trampled Underfoot" and "Kashmir" alone, this double deserves its place in the pantheon. It's slightly chaotic, really, but the pleasure in the playing is undeniable.

125 BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS EXODUS

ISLAND, 1977

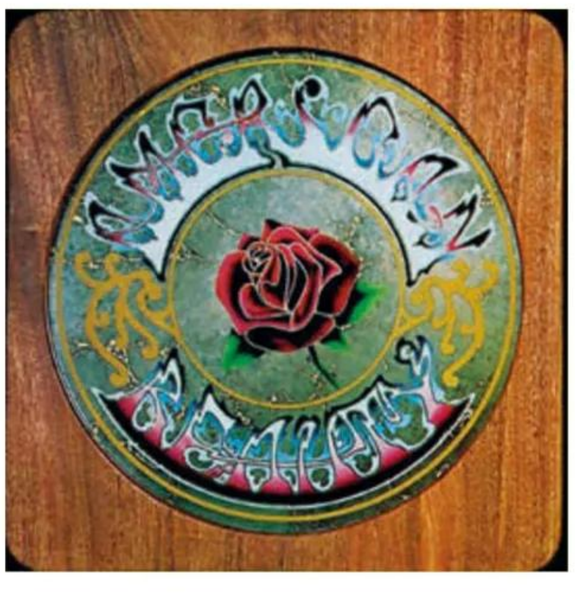
Moving to London from Jamaica after an assassination attempt, Marley settled into a new life in a new city, and recorded *Exodus*, where he dialled down some of his earlier intensity, and found that abstract worldliness suited his call-to-arms reggae.



122 GENE CLARK NO OTHER

ASYLUM, 1974

And here Clark goes astral. A startling sideways leap, here Sly Stone's presence in the studio seems to have helped nudge things towards funk. The production is baroque and extravagant, the songs sky-strafing, epic.



121 THE GRATEFUL DEAD AMERICAN BEAUTY

WARNER BROS, 1970

Beauty or reality? It depends on how you looked at the cover, but *American Beauty* was the Dead making good on *Workingman's Dead*'s promise – sunblind, gently hallucinatory folk and country song, clawing its way out of a stoned fug.

120 BIG STAR
THIRD/SISTER LOVERS
PVC, 1975

The album that never really was. *Third/Sister Lovers* was bolted together from a series of dissolute sessions, Alex Chilton out on the edge, with Jim Dickinson pushing the music further into the unknown. Beauty was rarely this broken, this desperate.

119 PINK FLOYD
THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON
HARVEST, 1973

As far as commercial breakthroughs go, this one is actually pretty odd. Sure, they're more focused on *Dark Side*, but Pink Floyd are still playing strange with their prog-rock material. The difference is, newfound clarity lets their various voices shine.

116 CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL
COSMO'S FACTORY
FANTASY, 1970

Tunes aplenty as ever, and a brooding 11-minute take on "Heard It Through The Grapevine". "Singles band"? Well yeah, but...

115 JONI MITCHELL
THE HISSING OF SUMMER LAWNS
ASYLUM, 1975

Where the fusion really started to flow; Mitchell's songs here were liquid, unpredictable, full of strange turns that somehow, through the force of her writing, felt completely natural. The beginning of her imperial phase, though few realised at the time.

112 JAMES BROWN
SEX MACHINE
POLYDOR, 1970

Sex Machine was just that; the sound of rutting, given mechanised force. Brown's discipline was, by this time, well-known, and justly celebrated. The artistry in that discipline made these funk-R&B classics lasting experiences; bodies carving the air in real time.

111 VAN MORRISON
MOONDANCE
WARNER BROS., 1970

A step back from *Astral Weeks*' liquid soul, here Morrison focuses his songs, building in lovely touches of jazz and blues, the voice still indomitable.

108 VAN MORRISON
VEEDON FLEECE
WARNER BROS, 1974

Morrison's other classic. Written and recorded after touring and divorce, *Veedon Fleece* is alternately gentle and heartbroken, lovely and forlorn. Here, ballads and wildness collide.

107 MOTT THE HOOPLE
MOTT
CBS, 1973

They made a number of great albums, but this is the gem. Some hard-worn rock'n'roll road warrior tales fed through the Hoople's glam-rock power machine.

104 THE ROLLING STONES
GOATS HEAD SOUP
ROLLING STONES, 1973

Après, la déluge? *Goats Head Soup* is the Stones in post-*Exile* comedown, a little ragged, still, but with greater poise, perhaps. It still gets short shrift, but the countrified "Angie", and an all-permeating air of elegantly wasted burn-out, feels perfect.

103 CHIC
C'EST CHIC
ATLANTIC, 1978

Their second album is perhaps their purest statement – everything Chic is here, from the unrelenting disco movement of "Le Freak" to the yearning of "I Want Your Love", and deep in the album's heart, "At Last I Am Free"'s melancholy.

118 NEIL YOUNG
HARVEST
REPRISE, 1972

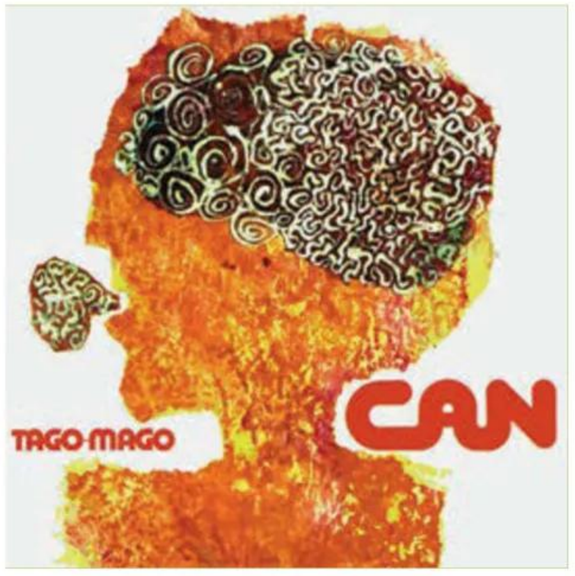
An acoustic reverie that soundtracked countless 'stoned on the ranch' fantasies during its decade, deeper listening to *Harvest* reveals plenty of uncertainty, insecurity, and the realisation that imagined utopia is the ultimate mirage. No wonder it cut through its times.

117 THE SLITS
CUT
ISLAND, 1979

There was little more exciting in 1979 than The Slits, three women making some of the most addictive avant-garde, reggae-informed pop/post-punk you could hear. *Cut* is rich, alive, full of initiative and tension.

114 WIRE
PINK FLAG
HARVEST, 1977

Some mistakenly thought that youth was punk's strongest currency. As Wire (and The Fall) showed, it was ideas. Presenting a bold aesthetic and strong intelligence, the band presented short, sharp and intelligent shocks we should all be alive to today.



113 CAN
TAGO MAGO
UNITED ARTISTS, 1971

A Krautrock behemoth, four sides that shifted from some of the most tightly interlocked, groove-based non-rock in the genre canon, to massive chunks of alien sound, as hallucinatory as their spiritual forebear Stockhausen. A classic carved out of worn stone.

110 ROD STEWART
EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY
MERCURY, 1971

Stewart's first batch of solo albums, released alongside his time in The Faces, are some of his most enduring. On this one, he gifts a song to the ages – "Maggie May" – and breathes spirit into Tim Hardin's "Reason To Believe".

109 TALKING HEADS
77
SIRE, 1977

CBGB's art-pop wing unveil their first exhibit, fronted by a cheerful "Psycho Killer" and full of spiked funk delights. In David Byrne, new wave finds a worldly and erudite new curator.

106 BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS
CATCH A FIRE
ISLAND, 1973

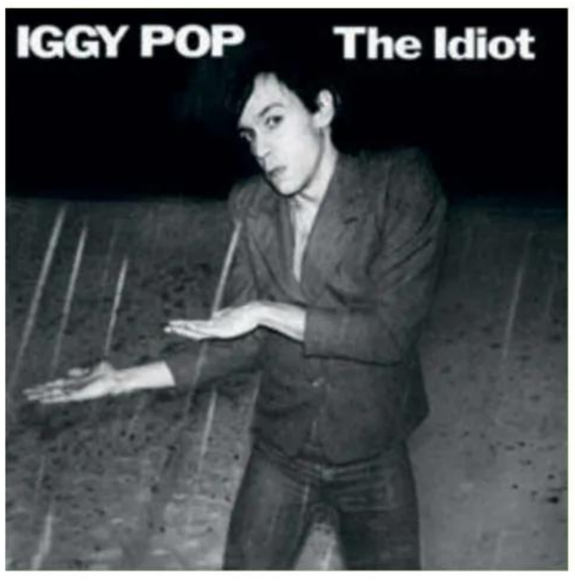
Something lost, something gained; Marley really grabs control of the wheel here, under the auspices of Island's Chris Blackwell, and Tosh and Wailer are already in the rear-view mirror. But it's also a gorgeous, chiming set of immediate reggae classics.

105 VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR
PAWN HEARTS
CHARISMA, 1971

They were terrifying on a good day, and *Pawn Hearts* had Van Der Graaf Generator on a very good day indeed. Massive, monolithic songs, wrought out of the furnace of noise created by prog's most uncompromising, but deeply human, group.

102 SIMON & GARFUNKEL
BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER
CBS, 1970

The title track eclipses much of this album, at least in general consciousness, but Simon & Garfunkel's writing was much smarter, much slyer, than they're given credit for: songs like "The Only Living Boy In New York" are rare pleasures.



101 IGGY POP
THE IDIOT
RCA, 1977

As the punk scene apes his former glories, Iggy, in cahoots with Bowie, explores a moodier proto-post-punk sound. Hitting on a claustrophobic electronic sound, the focus is forced on to Iggy's art, not his rock'n'roll.

Possessed of "awesome logic" (and a light tan): Kate Bush in Italy, 1978

THE INNER SLEEVE ...INSIDE THE ALBUM

"The English vibe is very appealing"

Nobody's wispy theatrical, KATE BUSH is growing in confidence. After the success of *The Kick Inside*, she wants more responsibility. "It's important to know what's going on," she tells HARRY DOHERTY, "even if I'm not controlling it."

THE enigma that is Kate Bush – it confuses us all. I've just read a bitter character assassination of Kate Bush (in another paper) and the central area of complaint around which this assault revolves is that Ms Bush is "nice". "An hour or so in the company of Kate Bush," this enlightened scribe considered, "is like being trapped for the duration in a very wholesome TV show with definite but unwarranted intellectual aspirations."

I can understand that as a reaction to a well-mannered chance meeting, but really, had the writer listened attentively to her first album (regardless of liking or disliking it), I don't think he would have come to the same rash and puerile conclusion.

Actually, Kate Bush scares me, for a combination of reasons. The first is the diplomatic pleasantness and awesome logic she displays in interviews, but that is only one dimension – she is, in fact, a "nice" person. It is when that initial impact is paired with the multifarious intensity of her music that I start to quiver.

The contrast is eerie, and frightening. In the studio, living out her imaginative fantasies, Kate Bush is stricken by a rush of surrealism, and suddenly a range of weird personalities are displayed. It is a subconsciousness that was evident on her first album, *The Kick Inside*, and it is captured to an even greater extent on *Lionheart*, the sequel now released.

"Nice" is not a word I'd turn to, to describe the consequences. The songwriting, the singing, the arrangements, the production have the mark of a singular personality. Kate Bush's music is more like a confrontation. At times, it makes the listener feel uneasy and insecure. Kate's approach to her work is marked by an obstinate refusal to compromise in any way, so she does not make it easy for the listener to get into the music. To begin with, it's a challenge.

Because, then, it's difficult to appreciate fully Kate Bush's music (and who, after all, is she to make such demands?) – compounded with the fact that she seems to have the Midas touch – she is set up for criticism, which must make it all the more fulfilling to carry off two awards in the *MM* Poll. Even when told of her performance in the Poll, Kate girlishly enthuses: "That's wonderful! Fantastic! Incredible!"

The success of *The Kick Inside* and its hit singles ("Wuthering Heights" and "The Man With The Child In His Eyes") was as much a hindrance as a help when the time came for Kate Bush to record a second album. As she has said before, the terms of reference were suddenly overturned. Instead of a rising talent, she is now a risen talent – and anything less than an emulation of the initial success will be interpreted as a failure. It's a pressure, though, that she can live with.

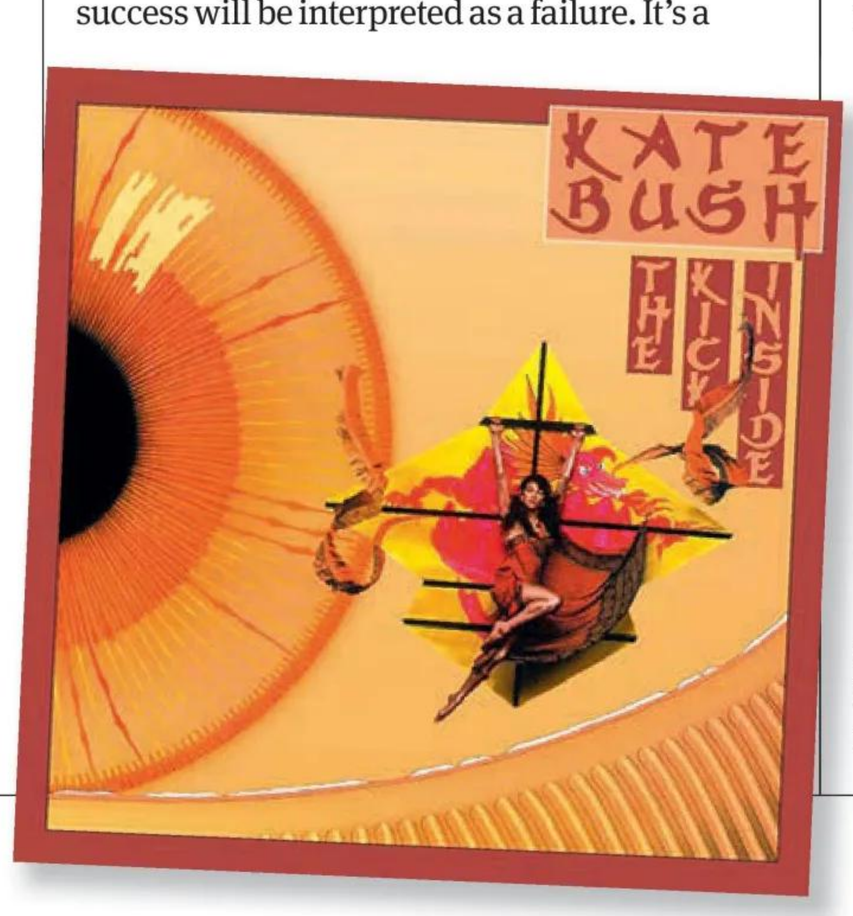
There are similarities to the debut album. *Lionheart* is produced once more by Andrew Powell and, generally, the musicians who did the honours on *The Kick Inside* are recalled. Kate wants the connections between her first and second album to stop there.

For instance, her own band makes a slight contribution to the new album, being featured on two of the tracks, "Wow" and "Kashka From Baghdad", and had it not been for a mix-up in the organisation, might have made a heavier contribution. It is, it appears, a sensitive situation, and one that Kate doesn't care to dwell upon, but she's still determined that, eventually, her own band – Charlie Morgan (drums), Brian Bath (guitars), Del Palmer (bass), Paddy Bush (mandolin) – will play a more prominent part in the recording proceedings.

On the subject of producing, it's significant that Kate is accredited as assistant producer and so is acknowledged as playing an active role in mixing the sound as well as performing. She takes an immense interest in recording techniques and states intentions to pursue ambitions in that area. There was, however, a problem in communication when she was involved in the production and her lack of professional lingo for various methods of recording often led to confusion and amusement in the studio.

"I feel I know what I'm talking about in the studio now. I know what I should hear. The reaction to me explaining what I want in the studio was amusement, to a certain extent. They were all taking the piss out of me a bit."

Overall, Bush was concerned that the new album should differ quite radically from her first. Maybe I'm a bit too close to it at the moment, but I find it much more adventurous than the last ➤



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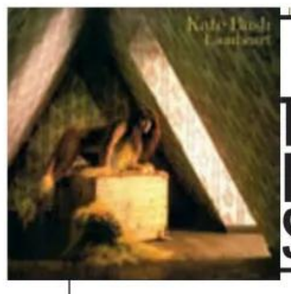


With her mother Hannah and brothers Paddy and John (right) at their home in East Wickham, London, September 26, 1978

one. I'm much happier with the songs and the arrangements and the backing tracks.

"I was getting a bit worried about labels from that last album: everything being soft, airy-fairy. That was great for the time, but it's not really what I want to do now, or what I want to do, say, in the next year. I guess I want to get basically heavier in the sound sense... and I think that's on the way, which makes me really happy.

"I don't really think that there are any songs on the album that are as close to 'Wuthering Heights' as there were on the last one. I mean, there's lots of songs people could draw comparison with. I want the first single that comes out from this album to be reasonably up-tempo. The first single was 'Hammer Horror'. That's the first thing I'm concerned with, because I want to break away from what has previously gone. I'm not pleased with being associated with such soft, romantic vibes, not for the first single anyway. If that happens again, that's what I will be to everyone."

She is acutely aware of the danger of being pigeonholed, and is actively engaged in discouraging that.

"If you can get away with it and keep changing, great. I think it should be done, because in that way you'll always have people chasing after you trying to find out what you're doing. And, anyway, if you know what's coming next, what's the point?

"If I really wanted to, I guess I could write a song that would be so similar to 'Wuthering Heights'. But I don't. What's the point? I'd rather write a song that was really different, that I liked, although it might not get anywhere."

HAVE you heard her new single, "Hammer Horror"? Now that's really different.

The major change in the preparation for *Lionheart* was undoubtedly that Kate, over-burdened with promotional schemes for the first album, was for the first time left with the unsavoury prospect of meeting deadlines and (perhaps) having to rush her writing to do that. It was a problem she was having trouble coming to terms with at our last meeting, when she spoke in obvious admiration of bands like Queen – who came up with the goods on time every year, and still found time to conduct world tours.

But Kate insisted that she wasn't going to be rushed, and eventually the songs came along. In all, it took 10 weeks to record the 12 tracks (10 are on the album), an indication of the meticulousness shown by Bush herself in exercising as much control as possible over every facet of the work. "I'm not always right, and I know I'm not," she says, "but it's important to know what's going on, even if I'm not controlling it."

I'll be interested to read the reviews of *Lionheart*. It'll be sad, I think, if the album is greeted with the same sort of insulting indifference that *The Kick Inside* met, when Kate Bush was pathetically underrated. *Lionheart* is, as the artist desired, a heavier album than its predecessor, with Bush setting some pretty exacting tests for the listener. Kate's songwriting is that much more mature, and her vocal performance has an even more vigorous sense of drama.

> "I guess I want to get basically heavier in the sound sense"

Musically, the tracks on *Lionheart* are more carefully structured than before. There is, for instance, a distinct absence of straight songs, like the first album's "Moving", "Saxophone Song", "The Man With The Child In His Eyes" and "The Kick Inside". Here, only "Oh England, My Lionheart" makes an immediate impression and I'm not sure that the move away from soft ballads (be it to secure a separate image) is such a wise one. As Bush proved on those songs on *The Kick Inside*, simplicity can also have its own sources of complication.

There is much about this album that is therapeutic, and often Kate Bush is the subject of her own course. "Fullhouse" is the most blatant example of that. There is no evidence that this song is autobiographical. One of the album's three unspectacular tracks musically (along with, in my opinion, "In The Warm Room" and "Kashka From Baghdad"), it is still lyrically a fine example of ridding the brain of dangerous paranoias. The stabbing verse of "*Imagination sets in/Then all the voices begin/Telling you things that aren't happening/(But they nig and they nag, 'til they're under your skin)*" is set against the soothing chorus: "*You've really got to/Remember yourself/You've got a fullhouse in your head tonight/Remember yourself/Stand back and see emotion getting you uptight.*"

Even "Fullhouse" is mild, though, when compared to tracks like "Symphony In Blue", "In the Warm Room" and "Kashka From Baghdad", which exude an unashamed sensuality. "Symphony In Blue", the opening track, is a hypnotic ballad with the same sort of explicit sexual uninhibitiveness as "Feel It" from the first album. "*The more I think about sex/The better it gets/Here we have a purpose in life/Good for the blood circulation/Good for releasing the tension/The root of our reincarnation*," sings Kate, happily.

CHRIS MOORHOUSE/EVENING STANDARD/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

"I'm not always right...": Bush in East Wickham, September 26, 1978

"In Search Of Peter Pan", "Wow" (running together on the first side) and "Hammer Horror" are examples of Kate's strange ability to let the subconscious mind run amok in the studio. "Wow" is tantalisingly powerful, and "Hammer Horror" (the single) is most impressive for the way it seems to tie in so many of the finer points of the first album and project them through one epic song.

That leaves three tracks, "Don't Push Your Foot On The Heartbrake", "Oh England, My Lionheart", and "Coffee Homeground". All of them with totally contrasting identities, but all succeeding in areas that many might have considered outside the scope of Kate Bush.

A few months ago, in the paper, Kate said how one of her musical ambitions was to write a real rousing rock'n'roll song and how difficult she found that task. "James And The Cold Gun" was her effort on *The Kick Inside*, and with "Don't Push Your Foot On The Heartbrake" she has tackled the art of writing a roasting rocker on her own terms. "...Heartbrake" (another piece of emotional therapy) might not be considered a rocker in the traditional sense of racing from start to finish but it's still one of the most vicious pieces of rock I've stumbled across in some time. The chorus is slow, pedestrianly slow. The pace is deceiving. It slides into the chorus. Bush moves into a jog. Then the second part of the chorus. It's complete havoc, and when it comes to repeating that second part in the run-up to the end, Kate wrenches from her slight frame a screaming line of unbelievably consummate rock'n'roll power that astounded me. A rather unnerving turn to Kate's music, I think.

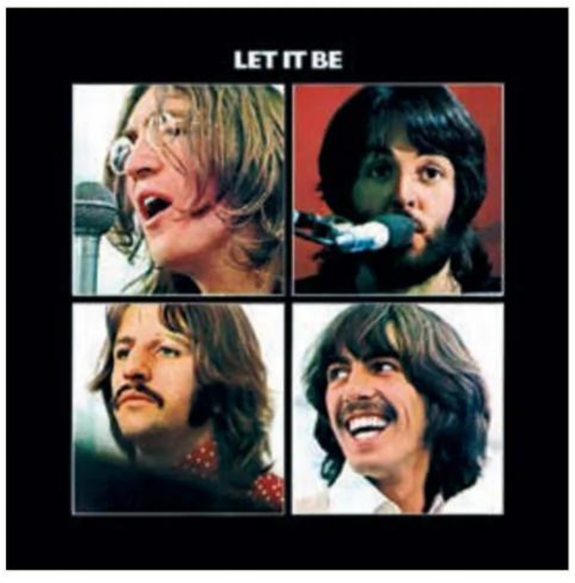
Then there's "Coffee Homeground", influenced by Bertold Brecht and inspired by a journey with a taxi driver who was convinced that somebody was out to poison him. For "Oh England, My Lionheart", from which the album title is derived, Kate is expecting a barrage of criticism because of the blatant soppiness of the lyric.

Kate's reasons for writing the song are simple enough. She had always liked "Jerusalem", and thought that a contemporary song proclaiming the romantic beauty of England should be written.

"A lot of people could easily say that the song is sloppy. It's very classically done. It's only got acoustic instruments on it and it's done... almost madrigally, you know? I daresay a lot of people will think that it's just a load of old slush, but it's just an area that I think it's good to cover. Everything I do is very English, and I think that's one reason I've broken through to a lot of countries. The English vibe is very appealing." ●

KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

Anticipating the *Never For Ever* cover illustration?: Zojoji temple, Tokyo, June 1978



100 THE BEATLES
LET IT BE
PARLOPHONE, 1970

The Fabs' swansong, recorded (pre-*Abbey Road*) for a fly-on-the-wall film project and orchestrally gussied up by Phil Spector, went big on rootsy blues rock and sublime balladry. Despite a cobbled and divisive approach to the project, it passed the audition.

99 KATE BUSH
THE KICK INSIDE
EMI, 1978

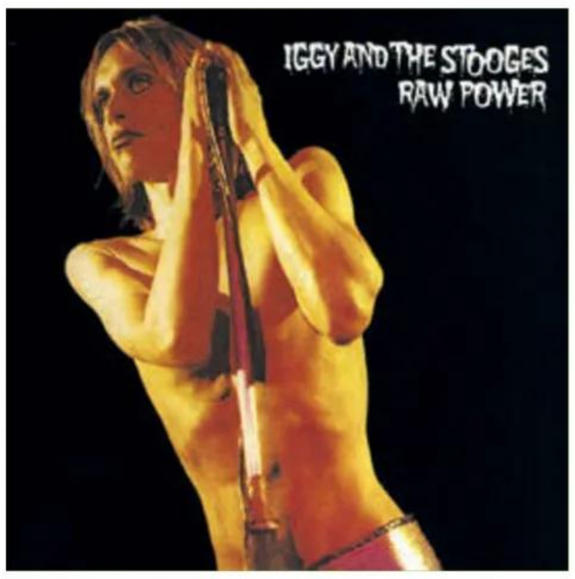
The beginning of a visionary journey. With a crack team of session musicians at her command, Bush – with encouragement from the Floyd's Dave Gilmour – launches a unique and theatrical proposition. Includes chart-topper "Wuthering Heights".

96 BIG STAR
RADIO CITY
ARDENT, 1974

Chris Bell was gone, but that didn't spell the end of Big Star's lachrymose magic. "September Gurls" was the anthem for the ages, but elsewhere the album burst with tender melody and freewheeling rock.

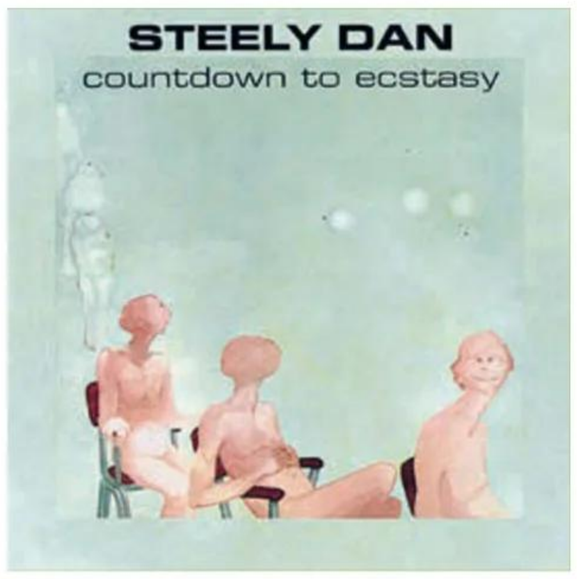
95 DAVID CROSBY
IF I COULD ONLY REMEMBER MY NAME
ATLANTIC, 1971

The erstwhile Byrd frees his mind and flies his freak flag. An expansive, impressionistic and evocative solo debut.



92 IGGY AND THE STOOGES
RAW POWER
COLUMBIA, 1973

A nuclear A-bomb. David Bowie's dicey remixing can't tame this feral force of nature. A ferocious, delinquent snarl of a record, with James Williamson's complex riffing at its heart.



91 STEELY DAN
COUNTDOWN TO ECSTASY
ABC, 1972

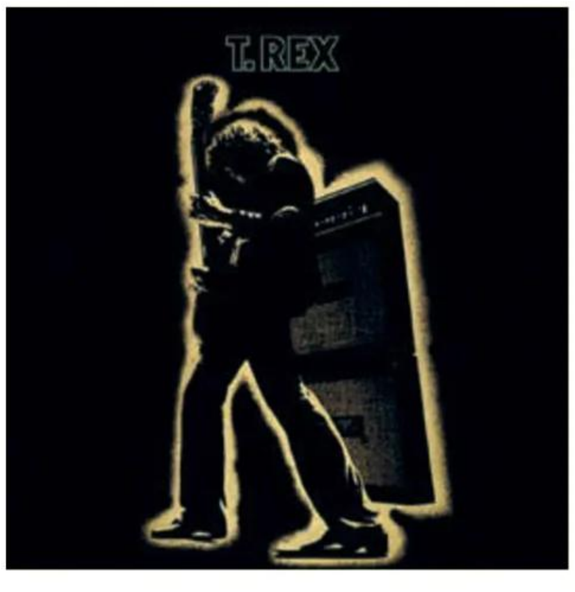
"...They got the Steely Dan T shirt..." On the Dan's second "band" album, the players are delighting in being given extra room, while Becker and Fagen are adding characters to the population of their affluent, vaguely disaffected world.

88 BLACK SABBATH
PARANOID
VERTIGO 1970

Propelled to the mainstream by the title track – a hit written to fill space – the band proved to have much more in the tank, filling out their bleak worldview in epic and hard-swinging riffage.

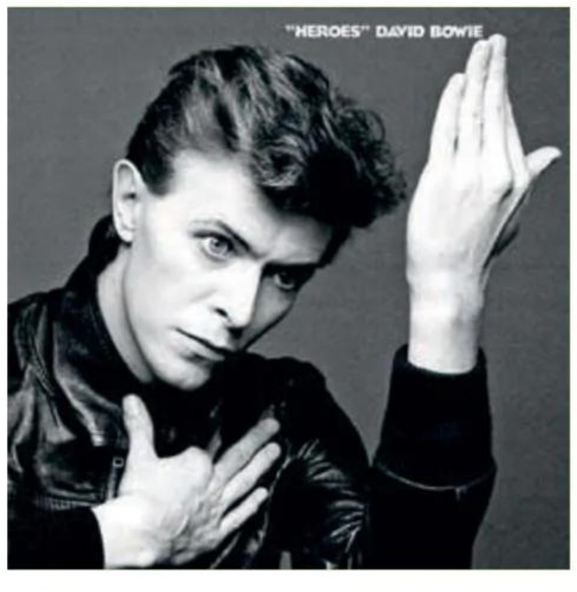
87 THE DOORS
LA WOMAN
ELEKTRA, 1971

Deep and funky blues rock is the record's heart. Its soul is found in the two mystical epics: "LA Woman" itself, and "Riders On The Storm" – essentially the band's last will and testament. Magical.



84 T.REX
ELECTRIC WARRIOR
FLY/REPRISE, 1971

Glam plugs in and quite righteously gets it on. Bolan's mystical whimsy gives full way to jiving rock'n'roll, meaty electric riffs and the cosmic dance of life. Gong-banging brilliance.



83 DAVID BOWIE
"HEROES"
RCA, 1977

The *Low* crew reconvene in Berlin for an experimental art rock endeavour, Oblique Strategies and all. Robert Fripp arrives just in time to gild the title track with an unforgettable lead line.

98 BRIAN ENO
DISCREET MUSIC
OBSCURE, 1975

Striving for Satie's "furniture music", Eno drifts into the ambient sphere with a 30-minute minimalist piece on synthesiser and tape delay, and three variations on Pachelbel's 'Canon In D Major'.

97 BLACK SABBATH
MASTER OF REALITY
VERTIGO, 1971

The very foundation of stoner rock and Doom metal. Downtuned and heavier than ever, Sabbath's third came with an unyielding production which ramped up the menace. Also featured toker's choice "Sweet Leaf".

94 NEW YORK DOLLS
NEW YORK DOLLS
MERCURY, 1973

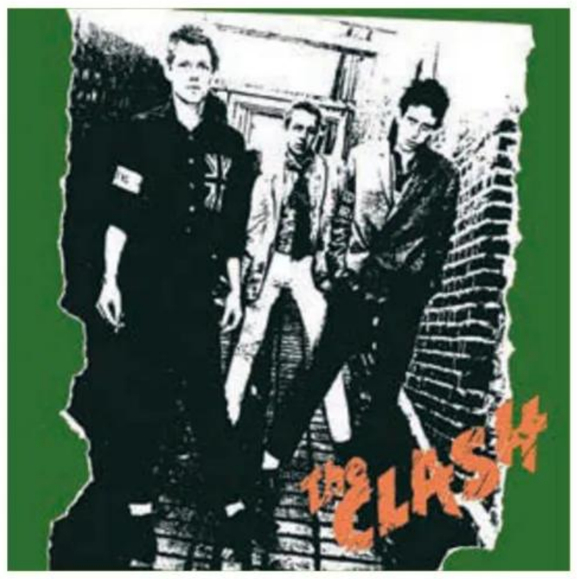
Campy glam rockers off the New York streets. The Dolls' first is all fast talk and flick-knife guitars, the latter from the incomparable Johnny Thunders.

93 DAVID BOWIE
DIAMOND DOGS
RCA, 1974

Dystopian sci-fi sleaze glam inspired by Burroughs, Orwell and Ziggy, Bowie's final glam record – home to the mighty "Rebel Rebel" – finds Halloween Jack and his feral, proto-punk diamond dogs running loose in an apocalyptic metropolis.

90 HERBIE HANCOCK
HEAD HUNTERS
COLUMBIA, 1973

Less experimental, and far funkier than its predecessor – described by its maker as "more tethered to Earth". The album title was later adopted as the name for Hancock's touring band.



89 THE CLASH
THE CLASH
CBS, 1977

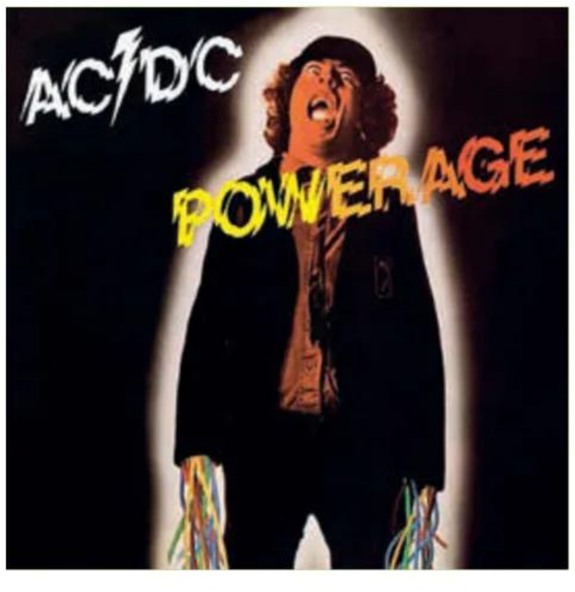
Adding melodic fire to the Pistols' nihilism, The Clash's debut tackled dead-end Britain, creeping Americanisation, sex, violence, class and musical oppression in, largely, two-minute bursts of snarling punk rage.

86 SUICIDE
SUICIDE
RED STAR, 1977

A vital, visceral and mildly perverse electro punk reimagining of '50s rock'n'roll. Peopled with desperate street rats, fed through Martin Rev's dark wires the band were out to infect everyone from Springsteen to Nine Inch Nails and The Jesus & Mary Chain.

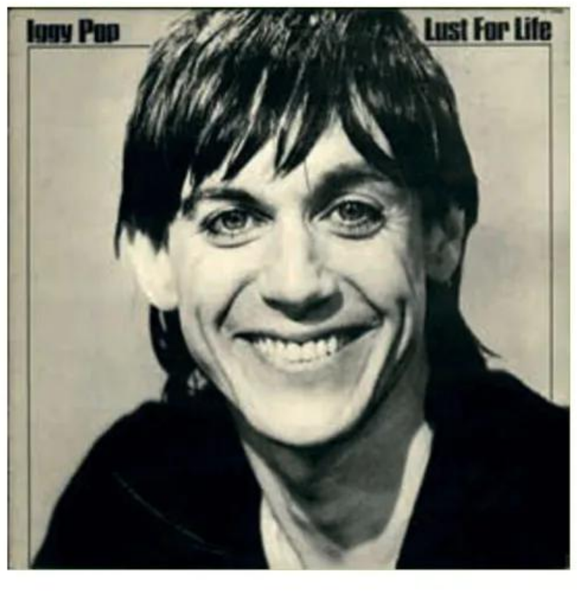
85 VAN HALEN
VAN HALEN
WARNER BROS, 1978

After a KO from punk, hard rock gets its heart jumpstarted. Incendiary fretwork and arena anthems do the business.



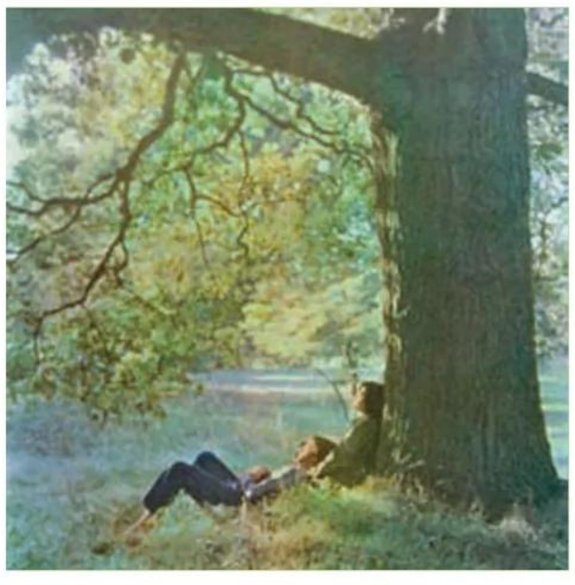
82 AC/DC
POWERAGE
ALBERT/ATLANTIC, 1978

Growing (a little bit) out of the sex, booze and Satanism, AC/DC's final Vanda & Young album cued up global superstardom on "Rock'N'Roll Damnation" and "Down Payment Blues", as Bon Scott came into his own as a low-down gutter poet.



81 IGGY POP
LUST FOR LIFE
RCA, 1977

Fitter, happier, the Ig comes back beaming with an album of classic rock'n'roll. Regrets? He has a few, but his rebel yell endures. Work with Bowie is important, but "The Passenger" he writes alone.



80 JOHN LENNON
JOHN LENNON/ PLASTIC ONO BAND
APPLE, 1970

His grizzled core exposed by primal scream therapy, Lennon's half of the Plastic Ono Band project was his rawest and most uncompromising on-record expression, from broken ballads to wound-poking missives on grief, God, fame and parental loss.

79 THE B-52'S
THE B-52'S
WARNER BROS, 1979

With "Rock Lobster", they inspired John Lennon to head back to the studio. Still, this Ohio outfit's debut has so much more – a surrealist wonderland on the dancefloor.

76 DAVID BOWIE
YOUNG AMERICANS
RCA, 1975

Seduced by blue-eyed soul sounds on a US escapade, Bowie ditches glam – literally, halfway through the *Diamond Dogs* tour – and transforms into the plastic soul heartthrob of *Young Americans* with the help of Carlos Alomar, Luther Vandross and a studio interloper named Lennon.

75 BRIAN ENO
BEFORE AND AFTER SCIENCE
ISLAND/POLYDOR, 1977

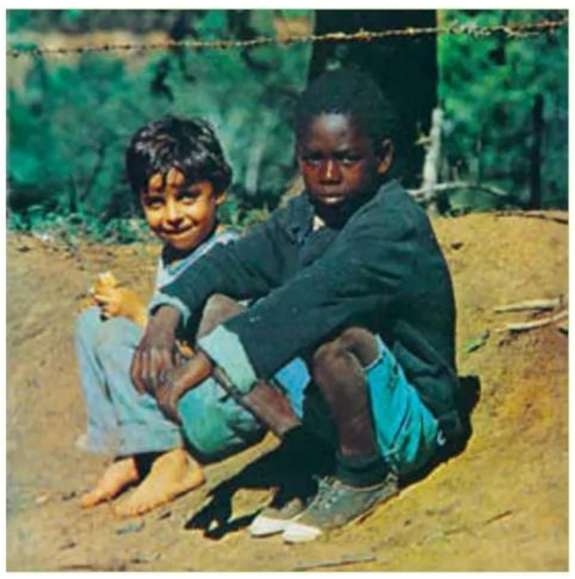
Eno's *Bringing It All Back Home, Before And After Science* captured his shift from pop to ambient, aided by the likes of Phil Manzanera and Robert Wyatt on the more classic material and his erstwhile Cluster cohorts as the record grew more atmospheric.

72 BRIAN ENO
HERE COME THE WARM JETS
ISLAND, 1974

Gathering 16 disparate guest musicians together and dancing at them as direction, Eno concocted an avant-pop classic where glam and art fused in wonderfully disjointed, esoteric shapes.

71 WARREN ZEVON
EXCITABLE BOY
ASYLUM, 1978

Zevon wrote songs like movie plots, all stirring themes and compromised heroes. This is his best, his satirical view on heroes, creeps and criminals, which from the title track to "Werewolves Of London" never stint on melody or E Street production.



68 MILTON NASCIMENTO & LO BORGES
CLUBE DA ESQUINA
ODEON, 1972

Nascimento's finest, on *Clube Da Esquina* his sweet voice soars over one of the greatest sets of Brazilian song, a landmark of música popular brasileira.

67 LED ZEPPELIN
UNTITLED
ATLANTIC, 1971

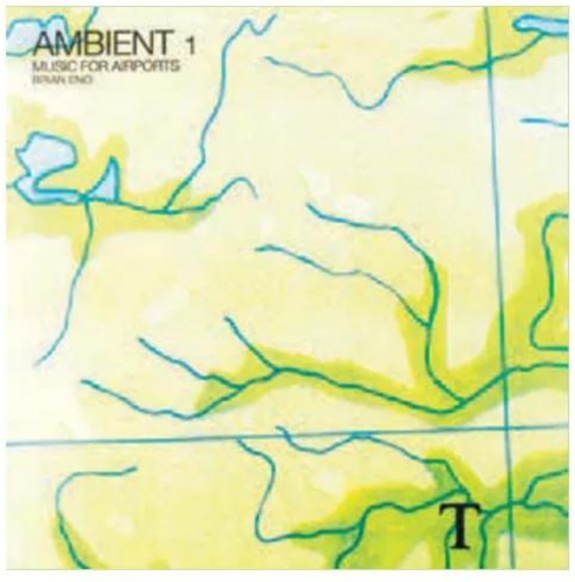
Now so big they didn't need their name on the cover, Led Zeppelin's exceptional fourth album contrived to surpass even their own successes. Their hardest riffs and Jimmy Page's best production yet satisfied the rockers. "Stairway..." kept them on the radio, forever.

64 SHUGGIE OTIS
INSPIRATION INFORMATION
EPIC, 1974

A slyly avant-garde masterpiece. Otis's guitar chops accompany songwriting that lets him truly shine. Experimental production and clacking drum machines shuffle loosely, in proto-Prince fashion.

63 JONI MITCHELL
BLUE
REPRISE, 1971

Singer-songwriter deluxe, as Joni embraces the personal in her writing, drawing on her relationships and making something spectacular from them. Hard to find an unblemished copy of this record – it's one to replay and live in.

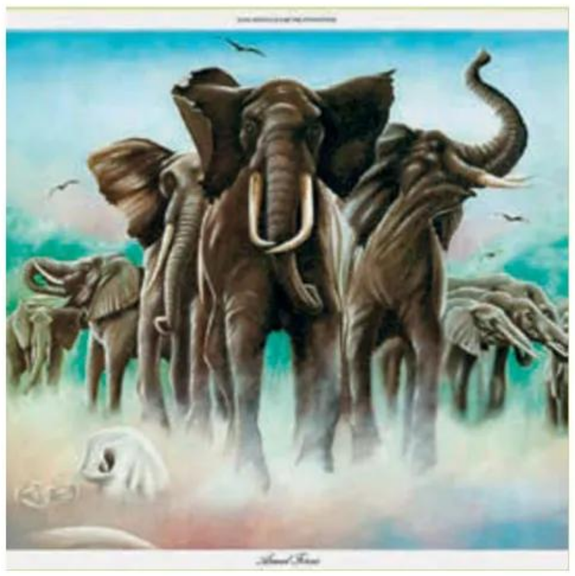


78 BRIAN ENO
AMBIENT 1: MUSIC FOR AIRPORTS
EG/POLYDOR, 1978

Designed as a sound installation intended to chill one out in the face of numerous boarding delays, Eno's first overtly ambient work consisted of purposefully austere and emotionless looping tape tones, vocal chorale and gentle piano. Gate closing, you say? Whatever...

77 DAVID BOWIE
THE MAN WHO SOLD THE WORLD
MERCURY, 1970

Back down to earth after "Space Oddity", Bowie explores madness, demonic desire, doppelgangers, Vietnam War atrocities and Nietzschean Übermensch on what's widely regarded as his metal album. AI runs riot on "Saviour Machine", too.

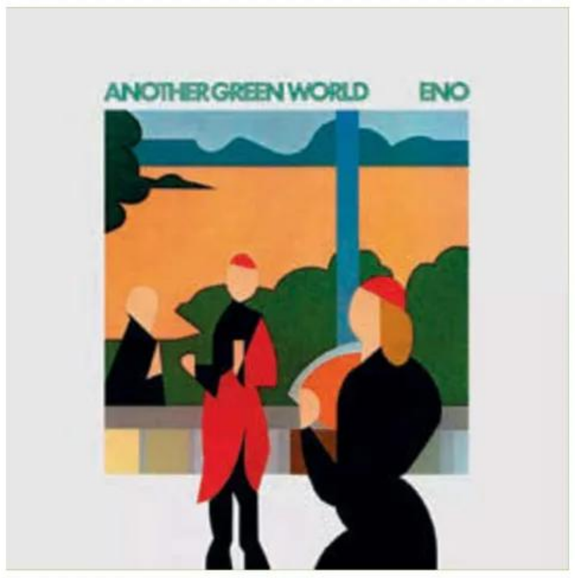


74 ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS
ARMED FORCES RADAR, 1979

Themed around warfare – emotional, class, societal and literal – Costello's third was as bright and brutal as machine-gun fire. "Oliver's Army" rendered the Irish troubles in Abba-esque pop and "Green Shirt" was a glorious tattoo from the frontline of the battle of the sexes.

73 TODD RUNDGREN
A WIZARD, A TRUE STAR
BEARSVILLE, 1973

A further step into the unknown. Pop structures can go hang in an unhinged psychedelic swirl through the stylistic rapids.

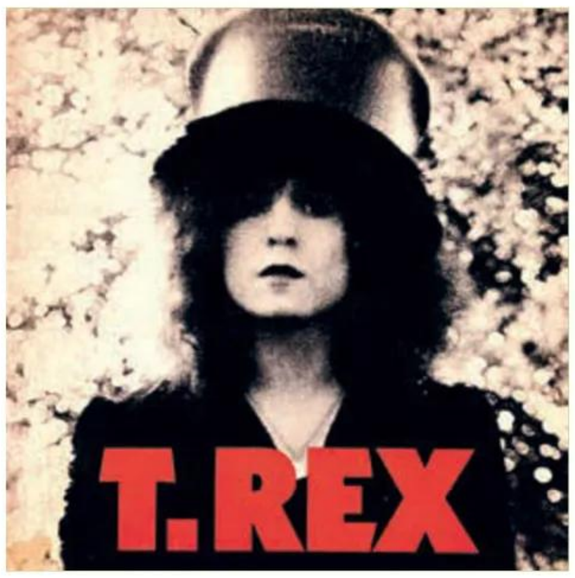


70 BRIAN ENO
ANOTHER GREEN WORLD
EG, 1975

A record to foreshadow the parting of the ways in Eno's interests: one way futuristic instrumentation, the other serene roomsound. In the deadpan delivery you can hear Blur and Bowies to come, but the sonic freshness and inventiveness and melody are unique.

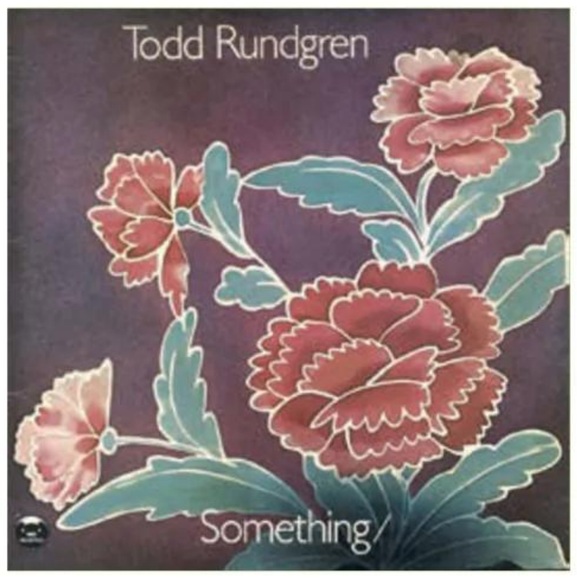
69 WILLIE NELSON
RED HEADED STRANGER
COLUMBIA, 1975

Concept album about a fugitive on the run after killing his wife and her lover. Includes "Time Of The Preacher" and "Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain".



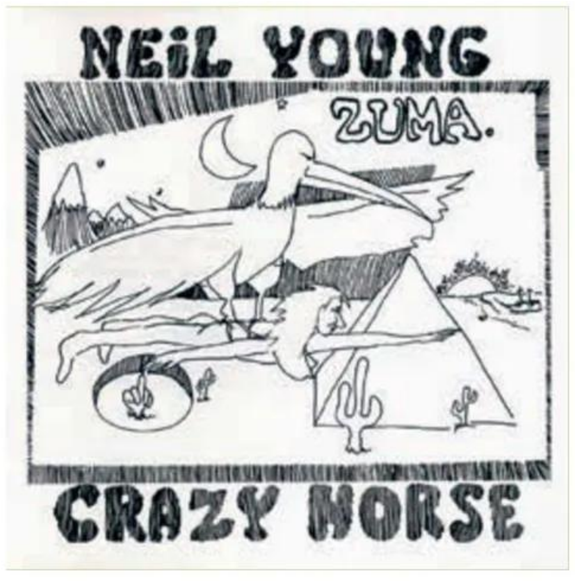
66 T.REX
THE SLIDER
T.REX, 1972

The silver-studded sabre tooth dream come true. The previous year's *Electric Warrior* was the breakthrough – now here was an album that sounded like a victory lap. Simpler and more instantly anthemic than his glam peers, Bolan brought new depths to the shallow end.



65 TODD RUNDGREN
SOMETHING/ ANYTHING?
BEARSVILLE, 1972

Seizing creative control, Rundgren plays everything from power pop to prog to glam stompers on a sprawlingly inspired double.



62 NEIL YOUNG
ZUMA
REPRISE, 1976

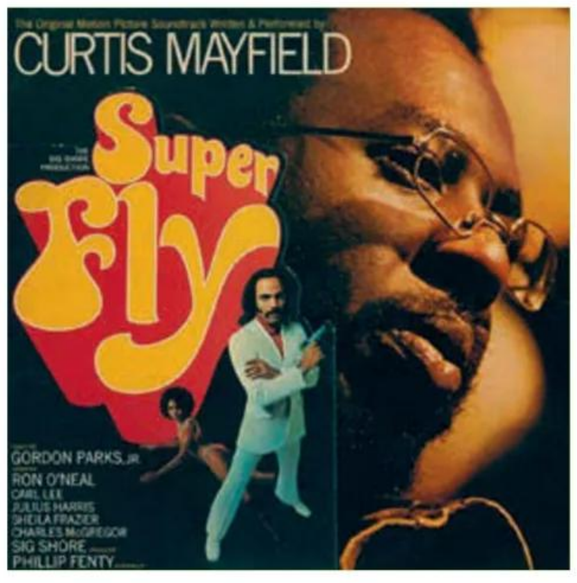
The 'Horse is dead – long live the 'Horse! Emerging from the ditch, if not from the bar, Neil applied the raw Crazy Horse aesthetic to off-the-cuff compositions. "Cortez The Killer" seems to be writing itself in the moment, but as it drifts, it casts a light into Neil's future.

61 JOHN MARTYN
SOLID AIR
ISLAND, 1973

Recorded fast, in just eight days, with members of Fairport Convention assisting. The title track is a tribute to Martyn's friend and labelmate Nick Drake.

60 LOU REED
BERLIN
RCA, 1973

Lou's unflinching rock opera, with echoes of undeveloped VU songs – and of that band's gritty themes. Concerning Caroline and Jim, it plays like Tom Waits cabaret but with all the jokes and atmosphere inverted. Bob Ezrin's production assists the horrible masterpiece.

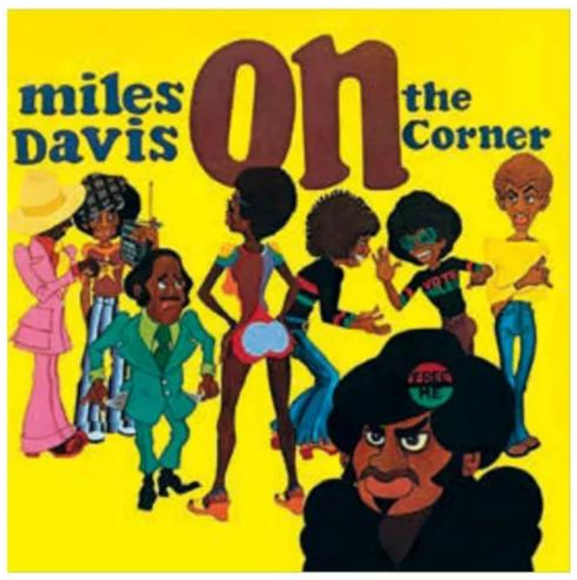


59 CURTIS MAYFIELD
SUPERFLY
CURTOM, 1972

In the absence of a larger-than-life personality, the retiring Mayfield arguably benefited from the blaxploitation soundtrack arrangement. Curtis brings a series of narrative snapshots that serve the story, while retaining – those drums! – his musical DNA. Huge.

56 BIG STAR
#1 RECORD
ARDENT, 1972

And so the doomed romance begins. Alex Chilton and Chris Bell created the power-pop fission: Beatles-esque melody, fruity R&B horns, unstoppable guitar. All this and a tenderness – see "Thirteen" – that cut to the bone.



55 MILES DAVIS
ON THE CORNER
COLUMBIA, 1972

He's really lost it this time, they said. But a heady mélange of free jazz, exotic rhythms and freeform funky riffs would prove a major grower.

52 DAVID BOWIE
ALADDIN SANE
RCA, 1973

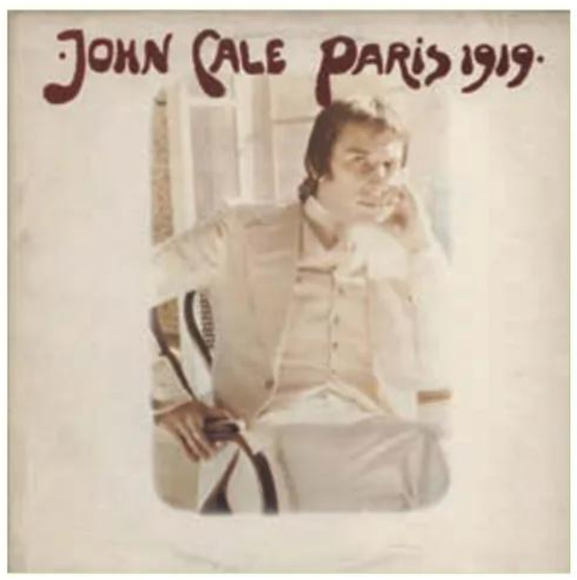
What happened on tour failed to stay on tour. Written largely while bringing Ziggy to the USA, *Aladdin Sane* is a fabulous creation: hard rocking, hyper-alert, subject to flights of inspiration and paranoid visions. Mike Garson joins to extend Bowie's avant-garde range.

51 NICK DRAKE
PINK MOON
ISLAND, 1972

A last will and testament, really: tripped down, achingly sad and starkly beautiful. These late-night acoustic soul-searchers add to a small canon but an almighty legacy.

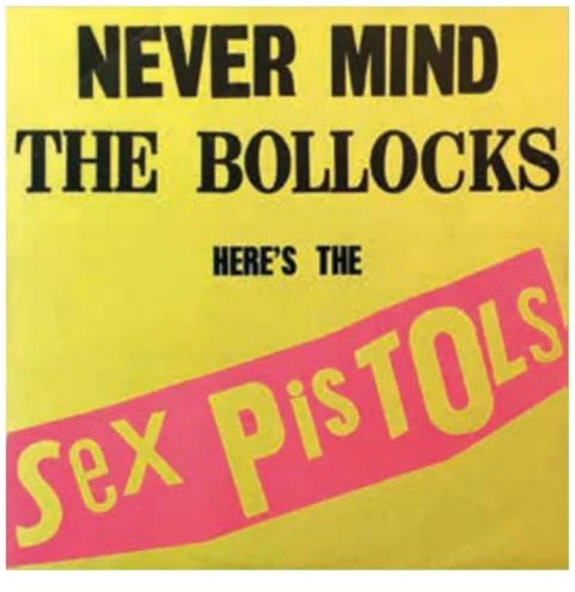
48 THE SPECIALS
THE SPECIALS
2 TONE, 1979

The 2 Tone/ska group to be reckoned with, the Specials had an ace in their pocket, the razor-sharp cultural commentary of Jerry Dammers. Their debut is so definitive, so confident, it's hard to see why anyone else bothered.



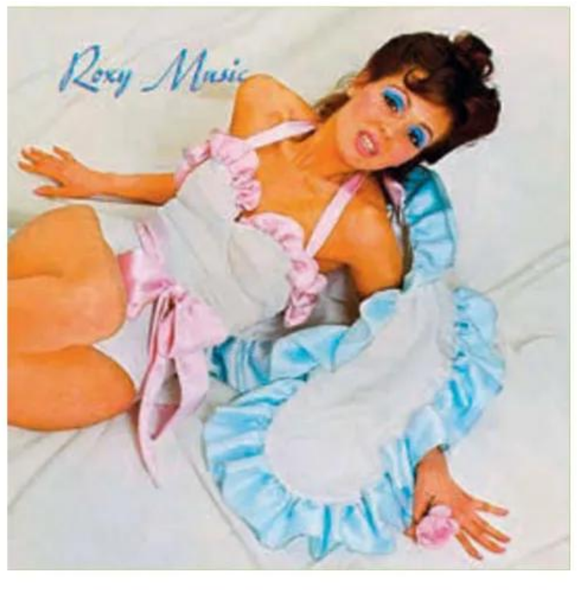
47 JOHN CALE
PARIS 1919
REPRISE, 1973

His masterpiece, *Paris 1919* is a heartbreakingly beautiful symphonic pop album, members of Little Feat joining in. Cale finds the "nicest ways of saying something ugly".



44 SEX PISTOLS
NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS, HERE'S THE SEX PISTOLS
VIRGIN, 1977

More edits, legendarily, than *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. But maybe there's something in that about knowing your enemy. While the first punk records sounded born of a moment, this had ambitions to outlast it. Huge and anthemic, a warning to the curious.

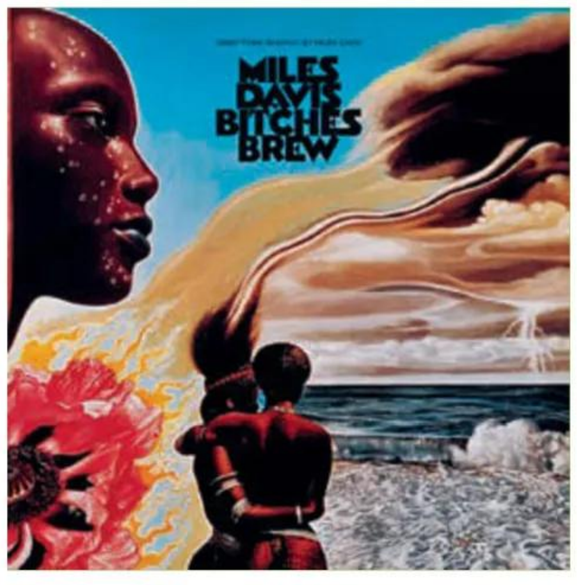


43 ROXY MUSIC
ROXY MUSIC
EG, 1972

An album that landed something like a unicorn, or UFO. A knowing, witty and postmodern masterpiece, Roxy's debut was of outlandish appearance, and contained music that acknowledged fleeting fashion as its subject, while being destined to outlast all comers.

58 MICHAEL JACKSON
OFF THE WALL
EPIC, 1979

Well before the fall from grace, *Off The Wall* felt like a new pop, out of disco, R&B and funk but its own thing, Quincy Jones burnishing everything to shine.



57 MILES DAVIS
BITCHES BREW
COLUMBIA, 1970

Electronic experimentation, electric instruments, wild melodies and off-kilter funk. A jazz-rock landmark is planted in the earth.

54 PAUL McCARTNEY AND WINGS
BAND ON THE RUN
APPLE, 1973

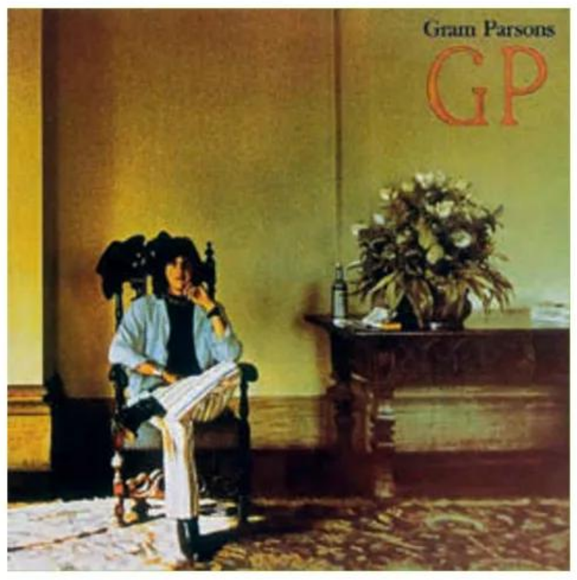
Aspiring to be anonymous, largely self-played, this is more like 'McCartney: The Sequel' than you might imagine, Wings or no Wings. Yes there are '70s celebs on the cover, but the whole thing is a testament to McCartney's ability to get things done against unlikeable odds.

53 TALKING HEADS
FEAR OF MUSIC
SIRE, 1979

Dadaist poetry, African disco and a touch of Frippertronics helped create the Heads' disorientating '70s high point, a varied compendium of dystopian urban storytelling recorded in Frantz and Weymouth's loft

50 FUNKADELIC
MAGGOT BRAIN
WESTBOUND, 1971

Final batch of wigged-out funk despatches from the original lineup. The fabled title track is a mournful, spectacular guitar exploration. On the cover? That's fashion model Barbara Cheeseborough!



49 GRAM PARSONS
GP
REPRISE, 1973

For all the hanging with the Stones, when Gram went solo – as Byron Berline's ecstatic fiddling announces – he was going there country. Emmylou provides backup, on a selection where Gram's own compositions shine the brightest. "A Song For You" a vulnerable highlight.

46 FLEETWOOD MAC
RUMOURS
LABEL, 1977

An album, like *Exile On Main St*, that says a lot about the circumstances in which it was made. Buckingham/Nicks didn't only reboot the Mac's music with gleaming AOR, it also reset their relationship clocks. *Rumours* recorded the fallout, in glorious harmony.

45 ALICE COLTRANE
JOURNEY IN SATCHIDANANDA
IMPULSE, 1970

Her astral jazz statement, *Journey In Satchidananda* is spiritual jazz at its most oceanic. Coltrane's harp sends up thousands of sparks of light across see-sawing riffs.

42 SERGE GAINSBOURG
HISTOIRE DE MELODY NELSON
PHILIPS, 1971

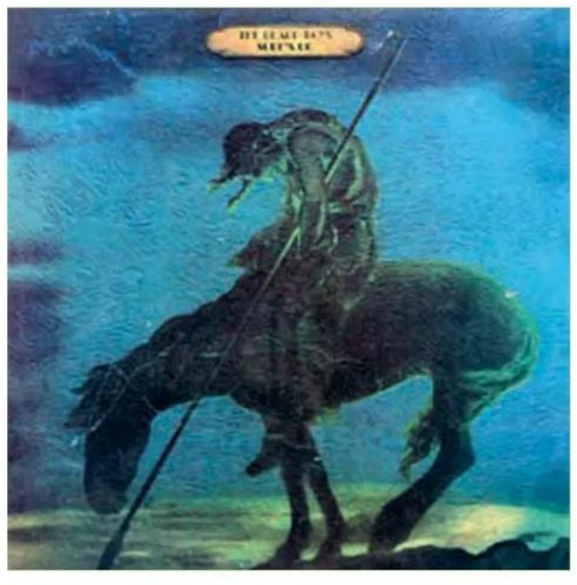
Partially autobiographical concept album. Gainsbourg knocks a Lolita-esque teenager off her bicycle while driving his Rolls-Royce. Inevitably, seduction ensues – by Jean Claude Vannier's arrangements, too.

41 CAN
FUTURE DAYS
UNITED ARTISTS, 1973

Continuing to explore the delicacy they had located on *Ege Bam Yasi* the previous year, Can's fourth album is a masterpiece of restraint and minimal balletic rhythm. Doesn't seem to begin or end, more conjure a shimmering improvisational groove.

40 CAROLE KING
TAPESTRY
ODE, 1971

That's the 1970s right there: a pinnacle of confessional singer-songwriter achievement. An album which helped a generation look at itself, selling 25 million copies in so doing.



39 THE BEACH BOYS
SURF'S UP
BROTHER/REPRISE 1971

Melancholic beauty as Brian Wilson continues to release songs from the abandoned *SMiLE* project. The "touring Brian", Bruce Johnston, meanwhile, delivered the classic "Disney Girls". Career-best songs on this elegy for a vanished America – and their former selves.

36 BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
BORN TO RUN
CBS, 1975

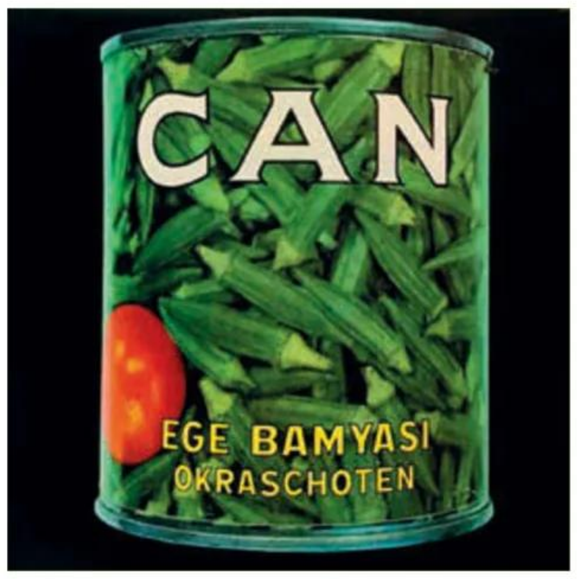
Anthemic – almost too anthemic, given how hard its songs are to dislodge from between the ears – *Born To Run* is one of Bruce's strongest statements, even as it gave birth to an entire genre of earnest American navel-gazing.

35 PUBLIC IMAGE LTD
METAL BOX
VIRGIN, 1979

Presented as three heavy 12"s in an industrial metal canister, PiL's second threw down the gauntlet before you'd heard a note. When you did, the band's dub-inspired groove and Keith Levene's guitar plotted a bleak new landscape, John Lydon its baleful soothsayer.

32 BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
DARKNESS ON EDGE OF TOWN
CBS, 1978

Out of commission for a few years due to legal and contractual complications, Bruce returned with a supple, unfussy effort, hymning the life of the American working classes. Heartland rock, they would come to call it.



31 CAN
EGE BAMYASI
UNITED ARTISTS, 1972

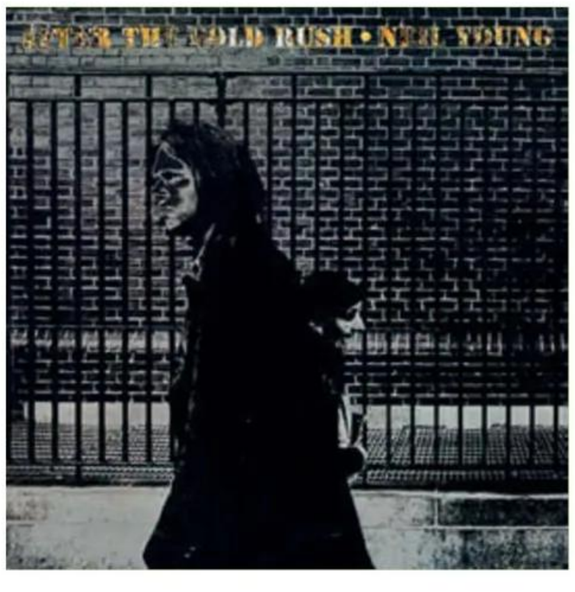
The improvising ensemble were now fronted by Damo Suzuki. Contains "Spoon", their hit thriller theme which funded the improved sound, and also the lovely "Sing Swan Song", which showed the band's aptitude for slight melodic wonders aswell as longform groovy workouts.

28 THE STOOGES
FUN HOUSE
ELEKTRA, 1970

A work of savage might. In later decades, every note of the session would be reissued and consumed. At the dawn of a new decade its brutality (and stealthily, its monolithic art) was unmatched.

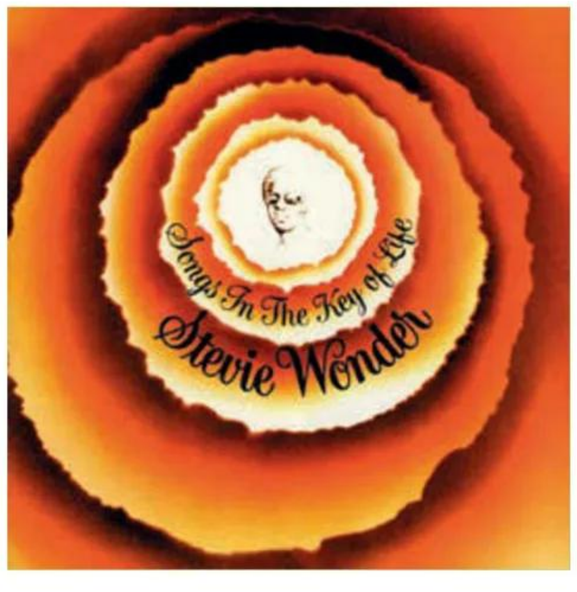
27 KRAFTWERK
TRANS EUROPE EXPRESS
CAPITOL, 1977

From signals in the air to modern travel, with *Trans Europe Express* Kraftwerk also off-handedly gave birth to electro and techno. Pioneering, and "so stiff they were funky", as Carl Craig said.



24 NEIL YOUNG
AFTER THE GOLDRUSH
REPRISE, 1970

The next year's *Harvest* would reap the rewards, but this was the more engaging work. Folky and achingly melodic at heart, the rockers like "When You Dance I Can Really Love" and "Southern Man" were among his very best.

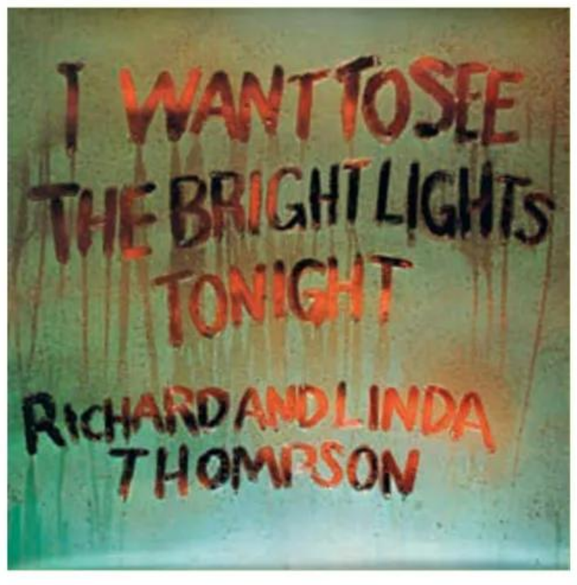


23 STEVIE WONDER
SONGS IN THE KEY OF LIFE
TAMLA, 1976

The final instalment of Stevie's five album imperial phase hits new heights. A gospel-tinged, funk-inflamed, jazz-inspired state-of-the-nation stunner.

38 PATTI SMITH
HORSES
ARISTA, 1975

From sleeve to production, punk's first long player looked and sounded as classy as a Fleetwood Mac album. Inside, however, Smith's flights of fancy through poetry and garage rock changed what revolutionary music might feel like, as well as sound like.



37 RICHARD AND LINDA THOMPSON
I WANT TO SEE THE BRIGHT LIGHTS TONIGHT
ISLAND, 1974

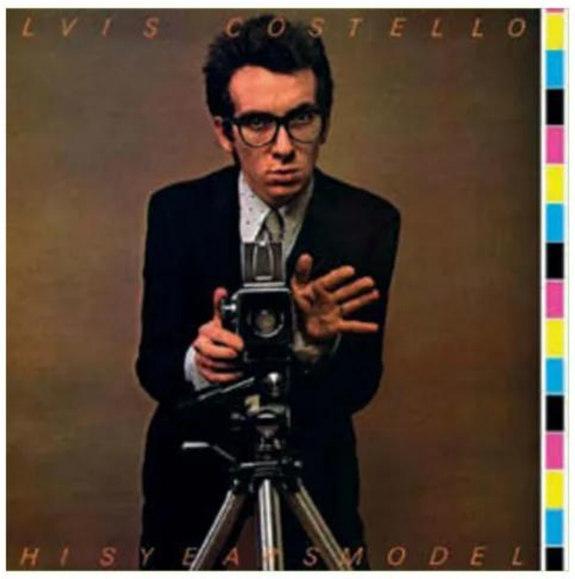
Their finest moment, *...Bright Lights Tonight* startles for its vision and its clarity. Every song's a gem, their intertwined voices breathtaking, Thompson's guitar surprising however many times you hear it. How folk-rock should be done.

34 ROBERT WYATT
ROCK BOTTOM
VIRGIN, 1974

His recent, life-threatening fall from a window had left Wyatt paralysed from the waist down, and out of circulation. *Rock Bottom* marked his return, an aquatic, hallucinatory set of lovelorn lyricism, hearts breaking underwater.

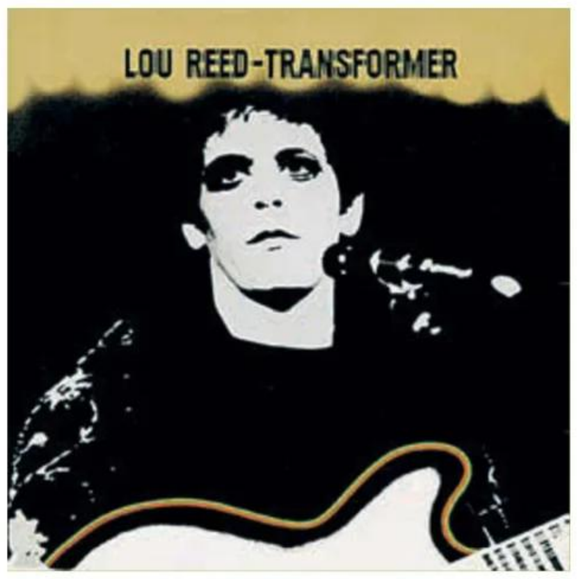
33 BLONDIE
PARALLEL LINES
CHRYSALIS, 1978

Iconic cover; stylish contents – Blondie's third was a perfect storm of the new wave. Even though standout "Hanging On The Telephone" was a cover version, the band had an arsenal of greats like "Sunday Girl" and "Heart Of Glass" which would all dominate the charts.



30 ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS
THIS YEAR'S MODEL
RADAR, 1978

Costello's incendiary touring band make their recording premiere, adding extra venom to their leader's lyrical vitriol ("Pump It Up", "Lipstick Vogue", "No Action").

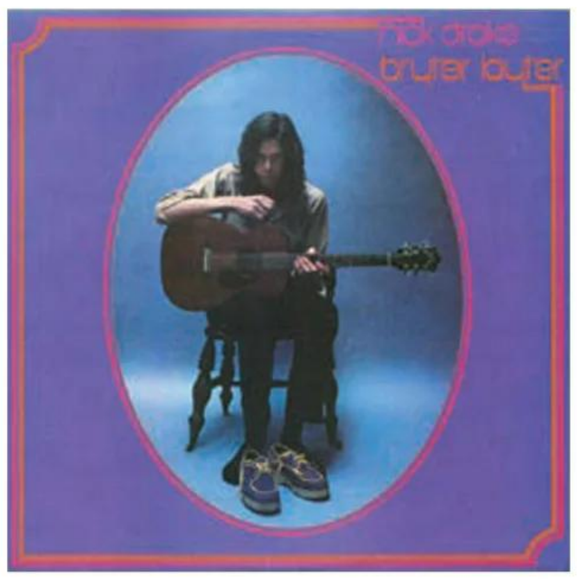


29 LOU REED
TRANSFORMER
RCA, 1972

In Ziggy's pomp, Bowie turned kingmaker, allowing Mott, Iggy and Lou to bask in his glory. *Transformer* was the pick: the producer's pick of tasteful arrangements allowing Lou's tales of a New York demi-monde to play as an irresistible glam cabaret.

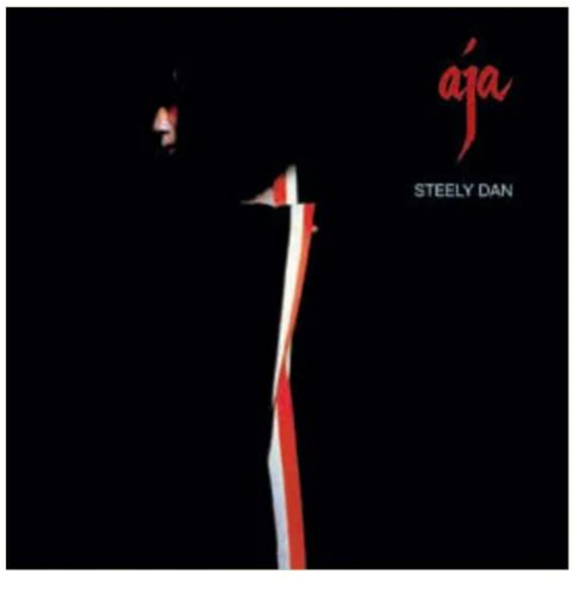
26 KRAFTWERK
THE MAN-MACHINE
CAPITOL, 1978

A Metropolis of the mind, *The Man-Machine* is maybe Kraftwerk's best-remembered album, thanks to their hits – "The Robots", "The Model", and towering over everything else, the glimmering, shimmering tear-scape of "Neon Lights".



25 NICK DRAKE
BRYTER LAYTER
ISLAND, 1971

An impressive cast (Richard Thompson is on guitar, John Cale on esoteric keys) joins Drake for his "band" album – yet he remains alone in a crowd, a still point in all the bustle. The album is jazzy and even poppy at times, but never less than reflective.



22 STEELY DAN
AJA
ABC, 1977

The apogee of the band's labour-intensive, bespoke studio process. A cast of guest players queue out the door to offer up the solo on "Peg", while "Deacon Blues" paints the definitive portrait of a mid-level, midlife struggle with reality.

21 JONATHAN RICHMAN & THE MODERN LOVERS
THE MODERN LOVERS
BESERKLEY, 1976

Debut by Jonathan Richman's ramshackle, Velvets-inspired rockers, originally recorded four years earlier. Six of its 11 tracks were produced by John Cale.

20

JONI MITCHELL

HEJIRA

ASYLUM, 1976

Joni hits the road, redefining her music – and a woman's expectations for satisfaction and success – as she goes. *By Laura Snapes*

BY the mid-1970s, Mitchell was keenly following Marvin Gaye in "moving away from the hit department, to the art department", keen to forge her own rhythms away from rock. Coupled with her split from drummer John Guerin, she was ready to give life the slip for a while.

Living between her car and anonymous motels, Mitchell wrote songs on her acoustic guitar. She thought of naming the collection of material 'Traveling', but that implied a fixed destination. Instead, she chose a reference to the migration of the prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622AD. "Hejira was an obscure word, but it said exactly what I wanted," she told Cameron Crowe. "Running away, honourably."

A new attitude required a new musical approach, furthering Mitchell's quicksilver mid-'70s evolution. On *Hejira*, Mitchell pared percussion back to the faintest patter, ditched choruses, and created nine fairly similar tone poems from her guitar (mostly electric on the recordings) and Jaco Pastorius's fretless bass. The scant reliance on hooks encourages a sense of forward motion (*The New York Times*' reviewer called it a "Los Angeles version of Kraftwerk's 'Autobahn'"). This minimal backing lets Mitchell's voice loose, as she sings in a meditative, instinctual fashion. "The poet took over the singer," she said in 1998.

Hejira contains some of her most expansive and idiosyncratic writing, each song filled with unanswered questions about the definition and contradictions of fulfilment. To be a solo travelling woman requires a heightened sensitivity to the environment, and Mitchell vibrates at the frequency of her gorgeous, sensory landscapes. There are towering pinewood trees and vivid blue skies streaked with vapour trails. Snow "*gathers like bolts of lace waltzing on a ballroom girl*" in the spacious "Hejira", where Mitchell sighs with gratitude at her synchronicity with her surroundings.

As she acclimatises to the road, she clocks onto the behaviour of the characters she encounters. The dewy "Coyote" details a tryst with a philandering rancher (who may be Sam Shepard in disguise) – Mitchell knows that he has "*a woman at home and another down the hall*", but she enjoys their brief affair, and revels in his palpable consternation about whether to run away the next morning. "*Coyote's in the coffee shop/He's staring a hole in his scrambled eggs/He picks up my scent on his fingers/While he's watching the waitresses' legs*", she sings, high on intimate power.

To this day in popular culture, most women on the road are doomed figures, fated to die or disappear. In 2013, the cultural critic Vanessa Veselka wrote an essay for *The American Reader* titled 'The Lack Of Female Road Narratives And Why It Matters'. "We recognise that, in our world, a woman on the road is marked," she writes. "She has been cut from the social fabric, excised at such an elemental level that when she steps onto the road, she steps into an abyss. A man on the road is solitary. A woman on the road is alone."

Hejira remains one of the few counterexamples to this deficit – a restless rejection of what satisfaction and success is meant to look like for women as lovers and artists, and a fearless confrontation of the consequences that stem from rejecting the norm. ●

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 11 US 13
PRODUCED BY: JONI MITCHELL, HENRY LEWY
RECORDED AT: A&M, HOLLYWOOD

19

CURTIS MAYFIELD

CURTIS

CURTOM, 1970

What's going on? Curtis strikes out, on a concerned and widescreen debut.

By Stephen Deusner

BY the time Curtis Mayfield released his first solo album, he was already an industry veteran and had worked in nearly every corner of the music industry. He started singing and playing guitar with his friends from church choir in the 1950s, christening themselves The Impressions and scoring their first hit in 1958. Over the next decade Mayfield would write most of the group's material, including "Keep On Pushing" and "It's All Right" and a dozen other hits throughout the 1960s. He also worked as a staff producer at Okeh Records and even co-founded and ran his own label, Curtom Records, which signed The Staple Singers, The Five Stairsteps, and Baby Huey.

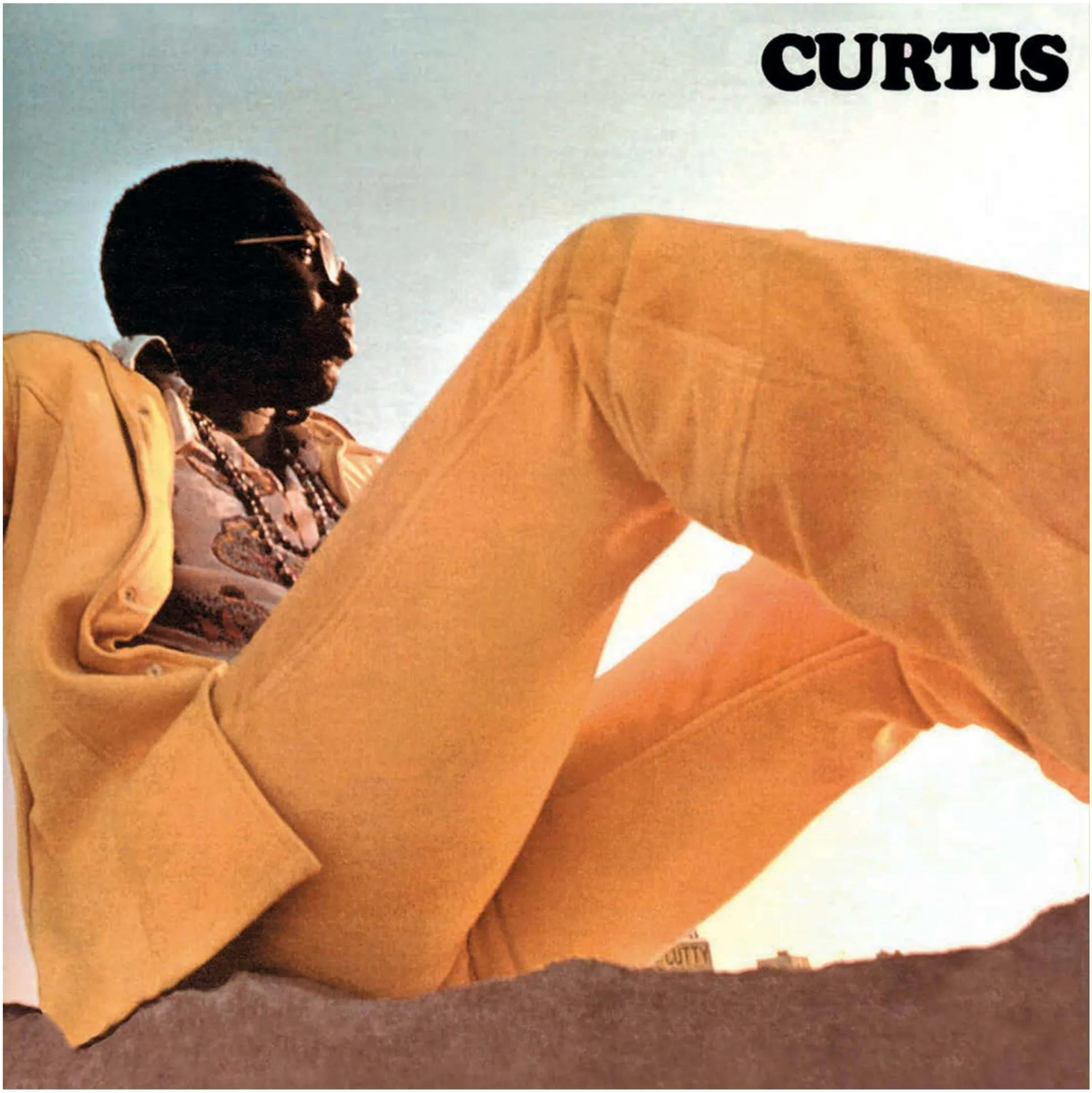
All of those enterprises and experiences came to bear on *Curtis*, released in 1970. While he had no plans to leave The Impressions, Mayfield longed to indulge more ambitious ideas, speak more directly about social issues, and incorporate a wider range of sounds and styles. Curtis sounds like an excited cry of freedom, a marvel of musical synthesis by a craftsman remaking himself as a funk auteur. He moulds Chicago soul into something new and gritty, distinguished by baroque arrangements, harder grooves, free-jazz excursions, psychedelic explosions, billowy harp glissandos, and horn fanfares taller than the Tribune Tower.

As though consciously announcing a split from his old group and his old sound, Mayfield opens the album with a daring hellfire sermon called "(Don't Worry) If There Is A Hell Below, We're All Going To Go". It's disarmingly apocalyptic, especially from an artist nicknamed the Gentle Genius, offering a dire inversion of gospel music. Mayfield promises damnation rather than salvation, as though America is already so thoroughly corrupt that it stains even its most well-meaning citizens.

Mayfield wasn't the first R&B songwriter to address social injustice in his lyrics, but he was one of the first to emphasise black pride and black community, as early as 1965's "People Get Ready". Curtis was the culmination of that musical outreach, toggling between ecstasy and depression, optimism and despair, the sweet dream of "Miss Black America" and the crushing reality of "The Other Side Of Town".

No song better exemplifies both the freedoms he enjoyed as a solo artist and the challenges he made to his listeners than "Move On Up", the album's vibrant centrepiece. As he exhorts people to *"take nothing less than the supreme best,"* he lets that taut groove and exhortatory horn line run for nine intense minutes. The single version was cut down to a mere three minutes, and while it never charted in the US, it has had an impressively long life, inspiring countless covers and samples. In 2020, Joe Biden even used it as an unofficial campaign soundtrack, blasting those horns after stump speeches.

Similarly, Curtis has remained surprisingly relevant the last 50 years. It received mixed reviews at the time, sold decently but not spectacularly, and was quickly overshadowed by Mayfield's *Superfly* soundtrack. But it remains the most pivotal album in his career, not to mention highly influential in its melding of sounds and social issues. ●



HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 30 US 19
PRODUCED BY: CURTIS MAYFIELD
RECORDED AT: RCA STUDIOS, CHICAGO

18

SLY & THE FAMILY STONE
THERE'S A RIOT GOIN ON
EPIC, 1971

From chaos and self-sabotage, a true one-off.
By Jason Anderson

FULL of blunted rhythms and sounds that feel frayed at their edges, *There's A Riot Goin' On* is rife with the same murk and hiss that no doubt filled its creator's drug-addled mind. Even at the time of the album's release in November of 1971, rumours swirled about the reasons it sounded as it did, with Sly Stone's compulsive overdubbing being largely perceived as a product of his creative paralysis in the wake of his group's extraordinary run of hits.

Others regarded it as an emblem of the spiral of self-sabotage that seemed likely to kill the fading superstar – that is, if the Black Panthers didn't get him first, as the increasingly paranoid Stone believed. These speculations attributed the otherworldly, unpredictable sound not to his avid exploration of the possibilities of multi-track technology and drum machines. Instead, it was heard as evidence of the degradation caused to Stone's master tapes by his propensity for inviting paramours to sing on tracks only to wipe their vocals once his seduction was complete.

Regardless of whether it was all by accident or design, *There's A Riot Goin' On* sounded like nothing else before it and – despite the countless efforts to replicate the breezy psychedelic soul of "(You Caught Me) Smilin'" and the queasy, loping cosmic funk of "Africa Talks To You (The Asphalt Jungle)" – like very little that's been made since.

It didn't even sound that much like Sly & The Family Stone, the band having largely disintegrated over the preceding two years. Originally intended for an album that was abandoned before they were included on 1970's *Greatest Hits*, "Hot Fun In The Summertime", "Thank You (For Being Mice Elf Agin)" and "Everybody Is A Star" were the last gasps for the Family as any kind of functional unit. Even the expressions of end-of-'60s disillusionment in "Thank You" did little to prepare listeners for the wracked, cracked-up nature of "Thank You For Talkin' To Me, Africa", a seven-minute reworking of the earlier hit that epitomised the despairing mood that prevails on the equally jammy likes of "Africa Talks To You (The Asphalt Cowboy)", "Brave & Strong" and "Spaced Cowboy". In his apparent determination to deconstruct the innovative fusion of rock, soul, pop and R&B that yielded some of the decade's most exciting music, Stone created music that instead reflected the poisoned hopes of the Aquarian Age. Thankfully, the fact that the songs remained so funky prevented them from being the massive bummers they might've been.

There's a similarly doomy feel to the album's otherwise sprightly lead single "Family Affair", which somehow became the band's biggest US hit despite (or because of?) the stark contrast between Little Sister's spirited vocals and Stone's semi-exhausted growl. On the follow-up "Running Away", Stone toys with a similar contrast of elements, the vigour of the horn section becoming an odd bedfellow with the lackadaisical nature of the vocal performances.

Strangest and spaciest of all may be "Just Like A Baby", with its ghostly groove and a barely-there vocal that's full of tenderness. Both elements are suggestive of Stone's playful ways, a quality that no amount of cocaine or PCP could apparently dampen completely. So pervasive was the tape hiss, it almost seems like another instrument, which may very well have been Stone's intention all along. ●

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 31 US 1
PRODUCED BY: SLY STONE
RECORDED AT: THE RECORD PLANT, SAUSALITO, CALIFORNIA

17

JOY DIVISION
UNKNOWN PLEASURES

FACTORY, 1979

They've got the spirit! How Joy Division, routed via Warsaw, arrived at a classic debut album.

By John Robinson

WHEN he takes to the stage to speak at a magazine awards ceremony in 2005, Peter Hook probably more has it in mind to be rude to Paul Weller than he does to articulate the singularity of Joy Division, but that anyway is what he helps to do. Accepting an award, he recalls how he had once been accosted by Weller when The Jam played in Manchester. "Are you in the support band?" Weller had asked. "No," Hooky said. "I'm in Joy Division, mate."

Joy Division, he was saying, were nobody's support band. And really, their music was no less prickly, and no more clubbable than Peter Hook. After punk's anthemic imperatives (no wonder people were inspired to get involved), the post-punk they helped shape was a more speculative and interior space. Joy Division songs weren't calls to action, but hymns for their own discerning congregation.

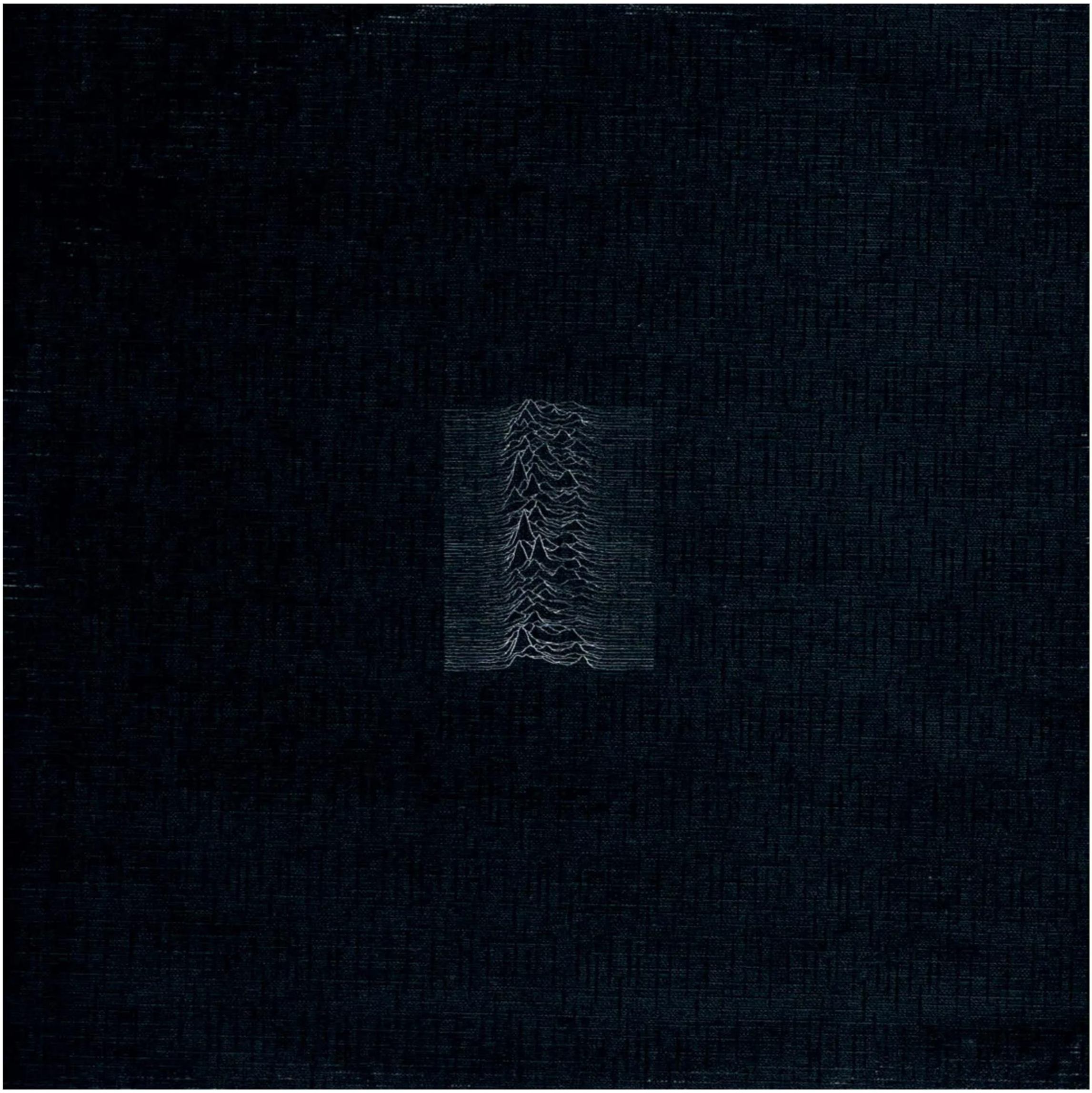
Before we even get to the music, as an object *Unknown Pleasures*, with its wordless textured sleeve, monochrome pulsar cover image, rounded inner corners and eerie reddish vinyl has already identified itself only as a creation apart from its times, uninterested in promoting itself. On its inner sleeve there was a photograph of an open door – the journey through it would be a significant act of faith.

For the recording of *Unknown Pleasures* in April 1979, Martin Hannett met Joy Division like medium finally meeting message, the estrangement expressed by "Disorder" enacted by the separation of the instruments in the album mix. There were occasional concessionary measures like the keyboard wash on the closing "I Remember Nothing", but the sound was all new, and the mood of the album set to disconcert. Glasses smash. Lift gates slam. Synthesised meteor showers strike our bows.

The band initially rebelled at the sound of their debut, feeling it to be lacking the power of their live gigs, but for what it loses in immediacy the album gains in conceptual unity: it works by actively accentuating the lack of "live" human give and take. Played by any other band in another environment "Day Of The Lords" would sound like a Doors cover, and "New Dawn Fades" like Black Sabbath. Played by Joy Division, this is music without reference points, a vision of humans facing unlikeable odds: frightening whether considered as a warning from history or a science-fiction vision of the near-future.

Ian Curtis doesn't only command the attention in the black-and-white photos of the period. On *Unknown Pleasures*, he is singer, songwriter, and the person mediating between these musical positions.

Perhaps that's what we still respond to in the seriousness of *Unknown Pleasures*. Not so much its intimations of mortality, but its vibrant signs of life, its strangeness and sense of adventure. Rather than a fear of the open door, Joy Division encourage us through it, to travel with people who have already glimpsed some of what might lie beyond. ●



HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 71 US -
PRODUCED BY: MARTIN HANNETT
RECORDED AT: STRAWBERRY STUDIOS, STOCKPORT

16

RAMONES

SIRE, 1976

A revolution is born as "da bruddas" render street life as bubblegum. *By Jason Anderson*

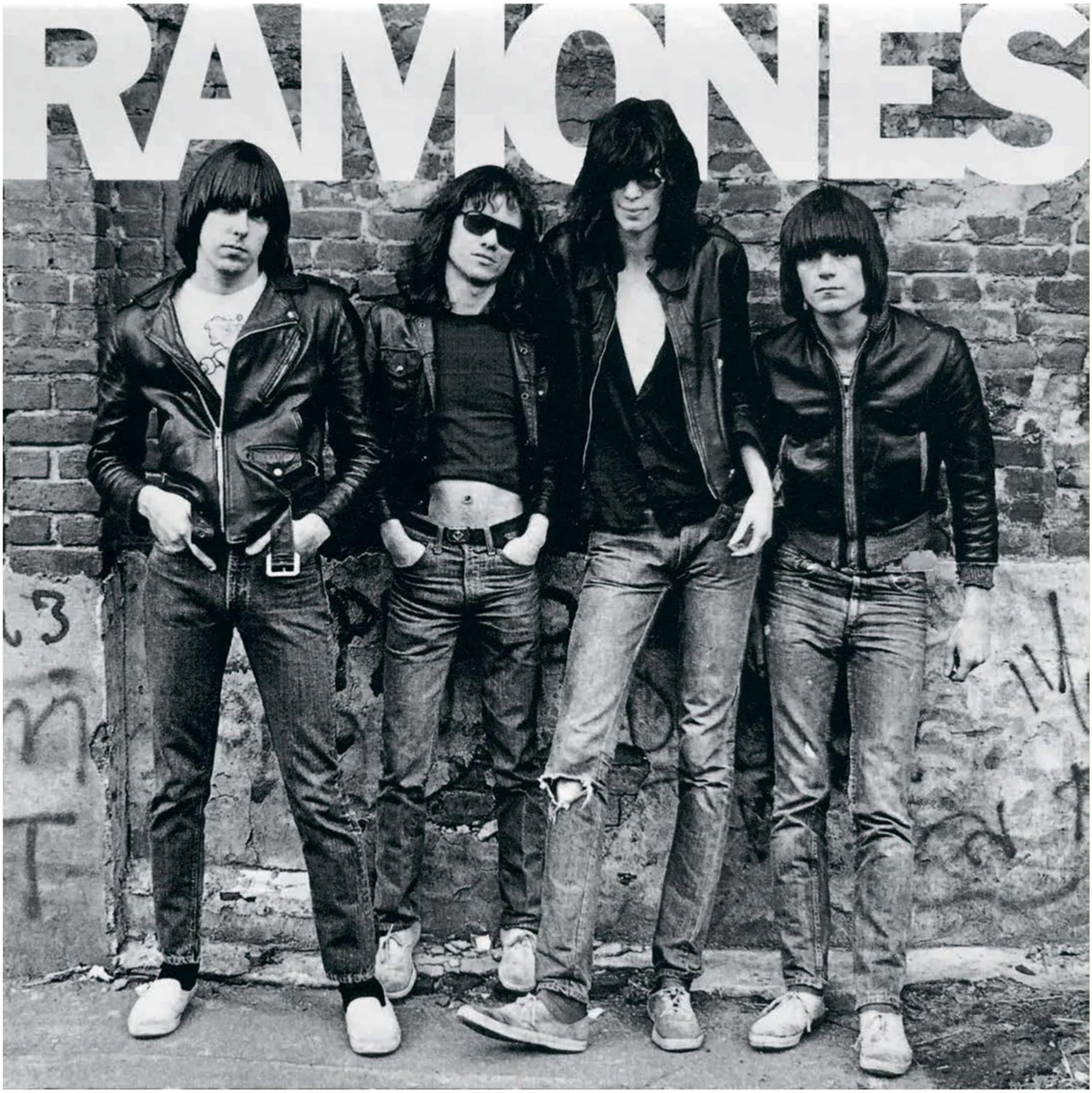
FOR those record buyers who first spied the glowering thugs on the album's black-and-white cover in April of 1976, *Ramones* represented something thrillingly new. The songs it contained were exhilarating for their speed and aggression, and bracing for their casual referencing of subjects that remained outré in rock: hard drugs, sex work, horror-movie mayhem, real-life violence involving razor blades and baseball bats and possibly Nazis, too. Four dark-haired lunkheads with the same phony last name, they seemed more like a street gang than the bona-fide recording artists they became after spending seven days at a studio on the eighth floor of Radio City Music Hall.

What the Ramones did was so fresh, the name for it was just beginning to be used beyond the circle already hip to punk, the underground magazine that documented the bands crawling out of CBGB's and other New York dives. In fact, the album's cover image was originally shot by Roberta Bayley for a Punk feature earlier that year.

But for all of the traits and elements that equipped the Ramones with the shock of the new, they were unabashed in their adoration of the (mostly) American pop of an earlier era. Remove the buzzsaw guitars and disconcertingly Hitlerian youth in "Blitzkrieg Bop" and you had the kind of sure-fire beach-party-starter that used to be the specialty of the Trashmen and the Safaris. And what was "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend" if not a girl-group classic dressed up in denim and black leather? Hell, the brothers – or "bruddas" as they'd become known to every fan who envied their authentic Noo Yawk accents – even included a cover of "Let's Dance", Chris Montez's sock-hop staple of 1962.

Then there was their love of The Beatles, which the band acknowledged when they retooled a McCartney pseudonym ("Paul Ramon") for their own name. The Fab Four's early recording methods and tactics also served as the guide for the band and producer Craig Leon as they hastily but effectively constructed their own template. Stark and punchy, the prevailing aesthetic was shockingly clear despite the abundance of fuzz. It's also one of many testaments to the Ramones' discipline, the band having actually stockpiled enough songs to see them through their first three albums with barely any dip in quality control.

In the decades that followed, the Ramones would become prisoners of their own shtick, tragically trapped in the template that they essentially perfected straight out of the gate. But knowledge of that outcome doesn't strip Ramones of any of its power or immediacy. And while there's plenty of darkness and brutality in songs like "Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue" and "53rd & 3rd" – whose account of a trick gone wrong remains a grim reminder of Dee Dee Ramone's troubled life – "Judy Is A Punk", "Listen To My Heart" and the rip-roaring "Let's Dance" exude an infectious sense of glee. During the revolution that the Ramones helped spark, it became easier to forget that punk could be this much fun. ●



HIGHEST CHART POSITION: CHARTS: UK – US 111
PRODUCED BY: CRAIG LEON, T ERDELYI
RECORDED AT: PLAZA SOUND,
RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL, NEW YORK

15

NEIL YOUNG
ON THE BEACH

REPRISE, 1974

Hellish visions, unmediated rancour, monumental self-indulgence – and, perhaps, one of the greatest albums of all time. *By David Cavanagh*

BY 1974, it was clear to those around Neil Young (and to a deeply apprehensive Elliot Roberts in particular) that the 28-year-old Canadian was prepared, in the name of artistic integrity, to do literally anything that occurred to him at any moment. Subvert and demolish his reputation. Screw up carefully planned schedules. Lurch from one chaotic tour to another. Was the chaos a drastic but necessary means of clinging onto his muse? Or was he simply lost, desperate and following the darkness?

These questions became more prevalent (and their answers more damning) when Reprise released *On The Beach* in July. There could now be no doubt that Neil Young was figuratively pointing a loaded shotgun at the *Harvest* generation. The famous line in "Ambulance Blues", "*you're all just pissing in the wind*", dumped its contempt all over the listeners' good faith. Like the Ratners boss who denounced his jewellery as 'crap', Young sneers at the suckers gullible enough to have mistaken his songs for pearls. It scarcely matters that he turns the comment back on himself in the next verse.

A common view of *On The Beach* was that it was an act of petulant self-indulgence. Young himself subsequently allowed the album to fall out of print, and it remained unavailable for 20 years until its CD release in 2003. Young was fighting something of a lone war when he recorded it; think how antiseptic the LA record-making machine was becoming by 1974, and then think of *On The Beach* with its fearless close-ups, its audio vérité nakedness. From his musicians and technicians, Young demanded a one-take, rough-mix spontaneity that highlighted every slurring, sloppy impurity in the performances. And the three songs on side two, thus candidly captured, offer mesmerising and disturbing insights into the mind of a fractious, disillusioned individual who could barely clutch a guitar but who knew that his harrowing truths needed expression.

The three songs have bloodshot eyes and listless tempos, but they summon up the will to inch forward, or perhaps they're just cantankerously disinclined to die. Young's incessant repetition of sardonic phrases ("*I need a crowd of people...*") gives "On The Beach" a hypnotic momentum that becomes a kind of black comedy. How many times can a man end up alone at a microphone? By the final stretch of "Ambulance Blues", we've been walked in a circle from the '70s to the '60s and back, Young's disjointed thoughts forming a chain of events – memories of the Toronto folk scene, the kidnapping of Patty Hearst – that begins to look like a pattern of premonitions. It all adds up to... what? A glimpse of a post-apocalyptic landscape, like the original Nevil Shute novel? That would be too convenient. But it's a desolate hell all the same. Regard the view from Young's bleary eyes in Nixon's resignation year: a derailed revolution, a powder-keg America, a tomorrow barely worth getting up for.

"*I'm deep inside myself,*" he sings on "Motion Pictures", "*but I'll get out somehow*". He could have cheated and used his talent to flatter himself. Instead he used it to impeach himself.

Had any rock star ever faced the world with so little deceit? ●

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 42 US 16
PRODUCED BY: NEIL YOUNG, DAVID BRIGGS, AL SCHMITT, MARK HARMAN
RECORDED AT: SUNSET SOUND, BROKEN ARROW, CA

14

NEU!

BRAIN, 1972

A "long line" into greatness. Michael Rother and Klaus Dinger reinvent rock's wheel. *By Jon Dale*

THERE are few sounds in avant-garde rock that are quite as immediate as the live-wire, pulsing mantras of the German duo of Klaus Dinger and Michael Rother, aka Neu!. Over three albums, they charted an ever-changing same, answering a simple question: how to streamline the base elements of rock'n'roll into something so potently distilled, it said just what was needed, and nothing more? The various answers they proposed to that question took in primitive turntablism (Side Two of 1973's *Neu! 2*) and furious proto-punk anti-anthems (see "Hero", from *Neu '75*), but nothing else they released was quite as much of a shock to the system as their 1972, self-titled debut, which announced, with grace and just a little flair, an entirely new form of rock music.

Based in the city of Düsseldorf, on the Rhine River, both Dinger and Rother had prior form with garage bands – The No and Spirits Of Sound, respectively – but they first met when part of the gang of musicians and artists circling around the formative Kraftwerk. Indeed, both Dinger and Rother were members of that group, for a brief time, appearing with Florian Schneider as a three-piece Kraftwerk on *Beat-Club* on German TV, in a performance that's a perfect premonition of what the duo would do once they dropped away from the Kraftwerk axis. Joined by producer Conny Plank, who would serve more or less as an unofficial third members of the group, and their most important enabler, Dinger and Rother entered Windrose Studio in December 1971 to record *Neu!*.

There had been little like it before. There were two keys to *Neu!*'s sound, the most significant of which, perhaps, was Dinger's drums, which jettisoned any classic song structure for an endless, unchanging rhythm accented with the simplest of highlights. It came to be known as 'motorik', though Dinger didn't appreciate the term, thinking it too machine-like, and he preferred calling it 'lange gerade' (long line/lane) or 'endlose gerade' (endless line/lane). The musical autobahn here transmutes into a thread of eternal possibility. Just as important was Rother's guitar, which worked in reels and ragas, the perfect way to achieve his stated goal – "I was determined to avoid all rock music clichés and to find new styles of expression."

You can hear this to devastating effect on the opening "Hallogallo", which fades in, slowly, as it means to go on, circles around itself blissfully for 10 minutes, and then disappears back into studio silence. "Negativland" is its dark side, a prowling, repeated bass line scoured by thick drones, and recordings of jackhammers. Plank's contributions, whether flanging bowed cymbals on "Sonderangebot" or swirling into space on "Im Glück", are every bit as significant. He was also an important interlocutor, patching over the fractious, antagonistic relationship between Dinger and Rother. Through the decades, Neu!'s hypnotic vision would influence the likes of David Bowie, Brian Eno, Public Image Limited, Swell Maps, Stereolab, but nothing quite captures the rush and roar of their 1972 debut, nor the blinding flash of its Pop Art cover, both seducing the listener into the never-ending now. ●

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: CHARTS: UK - US -
PRODUCED BY: CONNY PLANK
RECORDED AT: STAR STUDIO, HAMBURG

13

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND LOADED

ATLANTIC, 1970

While his band and his life disintegrate, Lou Reed celebrates the transformative power of rock'n'roll.

By Michael Bonner

LOOKING back on the circumstances around his departure from The Velvet Underground, Lou Reed had this to say in 1972: "I gave them an album loaded with hits and it was loaded with hits to the point where the rest of the people showed their colours. So I left them to their album full of hits that I made." Reed took a long time to get over *Loaded*. Although The Velvet Underground's most commercially successful album, for Reed it was synonymous with a period of immense drama, both personal and professional.

At the start of 1970, The Velvet Underground signed to Atlantic Records, while still $30,000 in debt to MGM. Tucker, meanwhile, took maternity leave in March. Existing frictions between Reed and Sterling Morrison continued. There were further pressures. The April to July sessions at Atlantic Studios overlapped with a 10-week homecoming residency at Max's Kansas City. Reed, worried about straining his voice, ceded four lead vocals to Doug Yule. "Every song was looked at with the understanding that there was a need to produce some kind of mainstream hit," he later wrote.

The songs represent a refinement of the band's aesthetic, a vibrant middle ground between the avant-garde stylings of the first two albums and Reed's Top 40 sensibilities. And such variety, too! From jaunty, Monkees-style pop ("Who Loves The Sun") to freewheeling rave-ups ("Oh! Sweet Nuthin'"). Then there's "Sweet Jane" and "Rock & Roll". The former, with its sensational 'D-A-G-Bm-A' hook, finds Reed on familiar territory, "*Standing on the corner/Suitcase in my hand*", watching Jack and Jane, two straights: a banker and a clerk. Reed describes the differences between man and woman, conservative and liberated, old and new, changing perspectives as the song progresses. It's a highly complex piece of narrative songwriting, followed by "Rock & Roll" – one of the great songs about the transformative power of music. It finds five-year-old Jenny, who "*one fine morning turns on a New York station and she doesn't believe what she heard at all*". Her "*life is saved by rock and roll*" and she is elevated to the ultimate Reed condition: "*It was alright*". "New Age" is another example of Reed's next-level songwriting on this album. A love song of sorts, delivered by Yule, it's full of tender nostalgia for a "*fat blonde actress... over the hill now/And you're looking for love*".

Lou Reed left The Velvet Underground on August 28, 1970 after the final show at Max's, leaving New York for his parents' home in Freeport, Long Island. The strain had become too much for him. In his absence, manager Steve Sesnick meddled with *Loaded*: he cut the "*wine and roses*" bridge section from "Sweet Jane", trimmed back the ending to "New Age" and messed with Reed's intended sequencing. Further, he shunted Reed's name below Yule and Morrison on the band lineup for the album's original pressing, and diminished his contribution on the sleeve: "All selections are by The Velvet Underground".

None of this, though, remotely diminishes the power and brilliance of *Loaded*. As Reed himself noted, "*Despite all the amputations, you know you could just go out and dance to a rock and roll station*". The power of rock'n'roll conquers all. It was alright. ●

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK - US-
PRODUCED BY: GEOFF HASLAM, SHEL KAGAN, THE VELVET UNDERGROUND
RECORDED AT: ATLANTIC, NEW YORK CITY

12

STEVIE WONDER

INNERVISIONS

MOTOWN/TAMLA, 1973

On higher ground. Stevie digs into social issues, with exemplary funk. *By Stephen Deusner*

INNERVISIONS was the product of great tumult. Prior to recording his 16th album in spring 1973, Stevie Wonder watched his marriage to Syreeta Wright dissolve. He went out on a particularly debauched tour with The Rolling Stones, which introduced and endeared him to a massive white rock audience. All the while he pursued new sounds and new subject matter, tinkering with new synthesisers and working closely with Robert Margouleff and Malcolm Cecil, who were known together as Tonto's Expanding Head Band. He was restless.

The album reflects all of these circumstances, inspiring Wonder to craft what was at the time his densest and most complex album. Crackling with energy and crammed with ideas, these songs ponder the state of America in the new decade, when the promise of Civil Rights had curdled into a dystopia of poverty, drug addiction, systemic racism, and political corruption. Opener "Too High" sets a harrowing tale of junkies to a rubbery jazz-fusion groove, that interpolation of doo-doo-doo's chiming in like a Greek chorus. Closer "He's Mistra Know-It-All" is too smart to namedrop Nixon explicitly, but it's clear the song is aimed at the disgraced President, who was a villain to the black community even before Watergate.

Wonder had written about these issues on *Music Of My Mind* and *Talking Book*, both released in 1972, but Innervisions goes deeper and harder, amplifying both his empathy and his outrage. "Living For The City" recounts a family's hard times scraping by in New York, and the album version pauses for what sounds like a radio-play dramatisation of a young man's corruption by unscrupulous pushers, racist cops and rigged courts. When Wonder sings the final verse, his voice is nearly unrecognisable, curdled with anger into a gruff bark through gritted teeth. It's the moment when he finally shakes free of the Little Stevie Wonder nickname that had dogged him since the 1960s.

After more than a decade recording with the Motown house band, Wonder had worked hard to gain complete freedom over his music. Holed up at the Record Plant in LA, he played nearly all the instruments on *Innervisions* himself – a liberty not extended to many other black musicians—and overdubbed them with Margouleff and Cecil. His personality comes through in every note: in the elastic groove of "Golden Lady" and the salsa flair of "Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing", in the wah-wah funk of "Higher Ground" and the delicate drama of "All In Love Is Fair".

Just three days after the album's release, Wonder was sleeping in the front seat of his manager's car when it collided with a log truck. He lay in a coma for nearly two weeks, and it looked like *Innervisions* might be his swan song. Fortunately, Wonder recovered and continued one of the most impressive runs of any artist, following up *Innervisions* with *Fulfillingness' First Finale* in 1974 and the double album *Songs In The Key Of Life* in 1976. ●

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 8 US 4
PRODUCED BY: STEVIE WONDER, ROBERT MARGOULEFF, MALCOLM CECIL
RECORDED AT: RECORD PLANT, LOS ANGELES; MEDIASOUND, NEW YORK

11

THE CLASH
LONDON CALLING
CBS, 1979

An audacious double album, contradictory but magnificent. *By Andrew Mueller*

LONDON Calling, The Clash's third album, was a masterpiece of many things, timing not least among them. In the United Kingdom, it was released in December 1979, seven months after the election of Margaret Thatcher. In the United States, it was released in January 1980, 10 months before the election of Ronald Reagan. For people of The Clash's socialist-ish sensibilities, war as per the title track, had been declared, battle truly was come down.

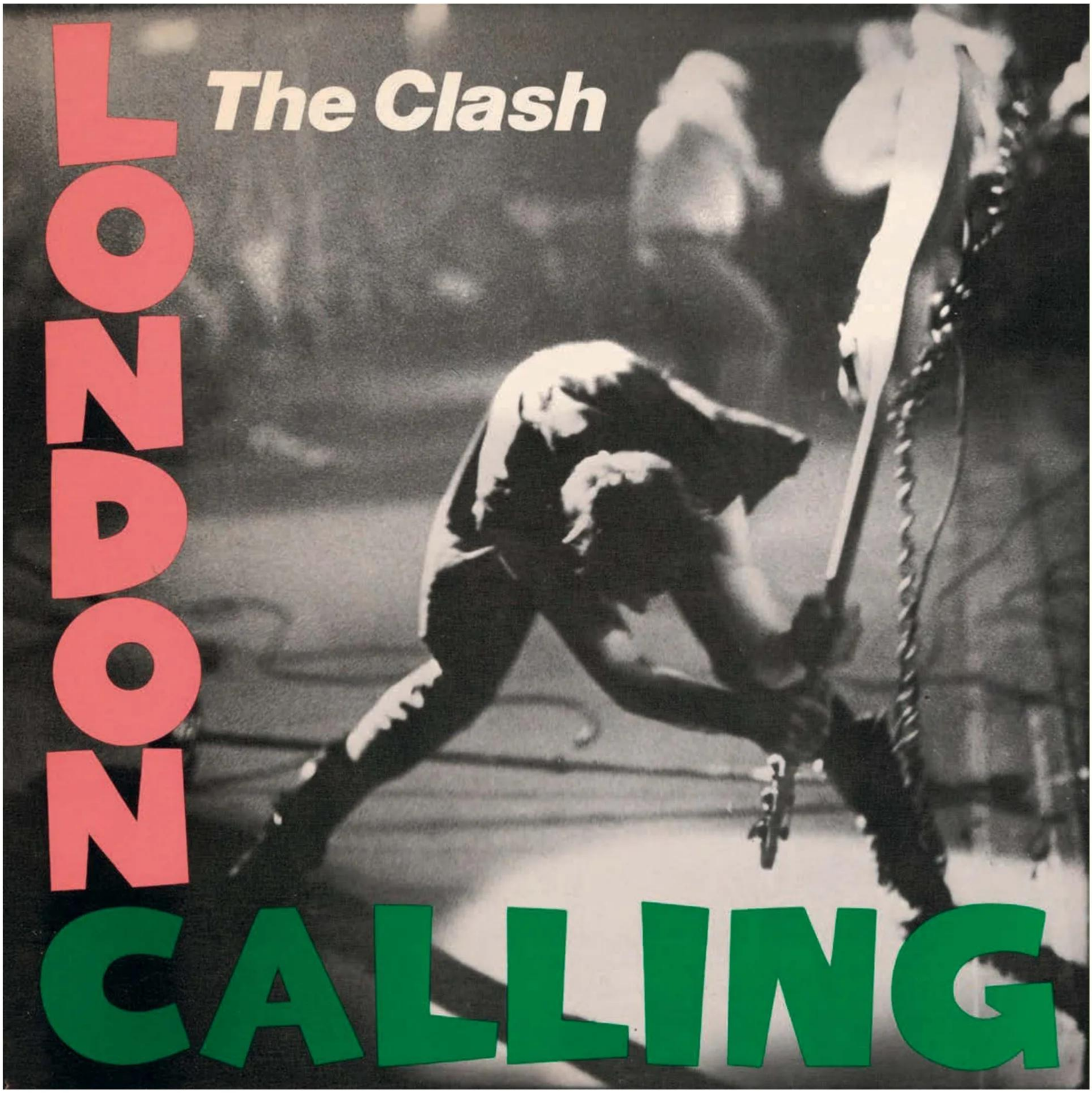
The album is now routinely considered a resounding punk classic. But in many respects *London Calling* was a very un-punk album. Its presentation, though certainly brash, was ambiguous. The theft of the pink and green title typeface from Elvis Presley's eponymous 1956 debut album could have been iconoclasm (on "1977", the B-side of "White Riot", The Clash had spat "*No Elvis, Beatles or The Rolling Stones*"), but it could have been homage (the quiff Strummer was rocking in the "London Calling" video certainly suggested some measure of affection for the King).

More crucially, *London Calling* represented a clear attempt to rise above the sloganeering and nihilism of The Clash's peers (and, to a significant extent, of The Clash's previous albums.) The 19 songs on *London Calling* flaunted such un-punky content as ideas, ideals, concerns – to say nothing of polished performances, exquisite melodies and choruses nobody's postman would have difficulty humming.

It brooked no snobbery about embracing commercial imperatives – the group enlisted the production services of the legendarily volatile but radio-friendly Guy Stevens, previously a handler of Mott The Hoople, Spooky Tooth and Free (and a man given, by many accounts, to explaining himself through the medium of hurled furniture). The Clash were now an indubitably proper rock'n'roll band, flaunting a preening frontman and a swaggering old-school guitar hero.

The Clash had dealt in vainglorious fist-pumping rhetoric before, and would again, but throughout *London Calling* the focus was almost always kept tight, picking out the little stories that tell the big ones. Whether or not this was a deliberate, over-arching plan, this hard line against delusions of grandeur worked massively to the long-term advantage of *London Calling*, sparing it the indignity of many protest records, of becoming a period piece, tied to the fleeting causes that inspired it. The Clash focused on the everyday desperations of life on the urban margins – aspects of existence which have remained pretty constant, in the city after which they named the album, for centuries.

There's a furious urgency about *London Calling*, which in retrospect sounds like four men determined to say it this straight and play it this loud while they were still young enough to believe in all of it (the chorus of the title track, after all, regards the Thames, historic fount of London's prosperity, as the inevitable, if not imminent, deliverer of the city's doom). *London Calling* is angry, enraged, excited and exhilarating – the riot of their own The Clash had been dreaming of since their first single. It lives, by the river. ●



HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 9 USA 27
PRODUCED BY: GUY STEVENS
RECORDED AT: WESSEX SOUND STUDIOS, LONDON

10

THE ROLLING STONES
STICKY FINGERS

ROLLING STONES/ATLANTIC, 1971

A deep trip into American music, and an unusually revealing Mick Jagger.

By Graeme Thomson

SCRATCH the surface of *Sticky Fingers* and it sounds very much like business as usual. Richards brings the groove, Jagger supplies the strut, and the battalion of archetypal knee-tremblers – "Brown Sugar", "Bitch", "Can't You Hear Me Knocking" – capture the Stones at their most furiously primal. Listen more closely, however, and you'll hear that something has changed. It's not just the fact that Richards' razor-wire riffs now tangle with Mick Taylor's lithe guitar lines; it's also that Jagger's arch theatrics come with a new and quite unexpected depth, a sobering introspection.

Sticky Fingers is the bridge that carried the Stones out of the '60s and into the '70s, pieced together over two years in the gaps between two major, somewhat mythical tours; various legal shenanigans; the integration of Taylor as a fully fledged Stone; and their departure from Decca to form their own record label. The sickly "Sister Morphine" dates back to the *Let It Bleed* sessions of spring 1969. A three-day stopover at Muscle Shoals, Alabama in December 1969 delivered "Wild Horses", "You Gotta Move" and "Brown Sugar", the latter debuted two days later at Altamont. The rest was recorded throughout 1970 at Stargroves, Jagger's country pile, and tidied up at Olympic Studios in London.

It was, according to Jagger, "a heavy time", and you can hear it in the music. Unlike most other Stones albums, however magnificent, *Sticky Fingers* is an emotional as well as a visceral ride. It's an album of thrilling extremes: the rockers are malevolent and merciless, the ballads heartfelt and reflective. Jagger traditionally hides behind a variety of poses and postures, but on "Wild Horses" and "Moonlight Mile", the long days and longer nights spent on the road "*sleeping under strange, strange skies*" seemed to pull something deeply personal out of him.

Have we ever heard Jagger so open and vulnerable? Only, perhaps, on "Wild Horses". Richards came up with the title and wrote the achingly lovely country-tinged melody, but Jagger meets the challenge head on with some superb lyrics and one of his most committed vocal performances. "I was definitely very inside this piece emotionally," he later said. "It's very personal, evocative and sad."

"Sister Morphine", left over from the *Let It Bleed* sessions, is another gruelling – if less personal – descent into darkness. The Stones have rarely covered the grim aftermath of addiction in such unsparing detail, rarely allowed themselves to hear "*the scream of the ambulance*". Jagger disputes Marianne Faithfull's claim that she wrote the entire song herself – "She wrote a couple of lines: 'cousin cocaine...', that bit" – but it's another outsider, Ry Cooder, who steals the show with his whiplash bottleneck guitar.

Sticky Fingers is deep, funky, funny, sexy, shocking and often very beautiful. For its release, though, the band had one more masterstroke – an Andy Warhol cover as genuinely iconic as any in rock'n'roll. Now, the Stones were defined as a brand as well as a band. ●

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 1 US 1
PRODUCED BY: JIMMY MILLER
RECORDED AT: MUSCLE SHOALS, OLYMPIC, TRIDENT, STARGROVES

9

DAVID BOWIE
STATION TO STATION

RCA, 1976

Run for the shadows... Paranoid and snowblind, the Thin White Duke concocts a potent hybrid of sinewy funk and robotic beats. *By Neil Spencer*

BY autumn 1975 it was clear that David Bowie had conquered America: the question was whether doing so had destroyed him. A consummate showman to the US public, the private Bowie was an inscrutable recluse, half-crazy from cocaine addiction, an emaciated occult explorer cowering in his rented Beverly Hills house in terror that he was under psychic attack from Hollywood warlocks.

Despite his wretched state, Bowie somehow delivered one of his greatest albums. *Station To Station*'s mix of sinewy funk and robotic beats, romantic balladry and cold alienation, had a grandeur echoed in Bowie's new persona, The Thin White Duke, a haughty and unsmiling aristocrat. The album consolidated Bowie's international status and provided a template for eager listeners like the still-unformed Joy Division, Magazine, Human League and Talking Heads.

Though the disco surge of "Golden Years", carried over from *Young Americans*, made a winning lead-in single, *Station To Station*'s overall chilly mood is defined by its opening, 10 minute-plus title track. The swirling sound of a steam locomotive gives way to grinding industrial chords as Earl Slick's sustained guitar wails in the distance. When Bowie's vocal arrives three minutes in, it's to announce the disquieting image of "*the thin white duke, throwing darts in lovers' eyes*", before he weighs in with operatic vigour to declare, "*Here we are, one magical movement from Kether to Malkuth*". Kether is the celestial crown on the kabbalistic tree of life, Malkuth the most earthly of the Kabbala's 10 'sephiroth', or 'stations'. And Bowie appears to be the one who "*drives like a demon from station to station*", speeding through life angst-ridden and cocaine fuelled but "*one in a million*" nonetheless. He's no longer awaiting the "*homo superior*" of "Oh! You Pretty Things" but become the "superbeing" he talked of in a 1976 *Playboy* interview.

Bowie's role as Thomas Newton in *The Man Who Fell To Earth* also shaped *Station To Station*. A scene of Newton sprawled in a dentist's chair watching a bank of TV sets, is surely the inspiration for "TVC 15", a piece of sci-fi hokum in which Bowie slavers over a holographic woman. Viewed from the era of cyber-porn and Facebook, the song looks prophetic, while its odd mix of barrelhouse piano and pounding, motorik rhythms hasn't worn badly.

The album's two sides end on twin melodramas. When Bowie described "Word On A Wing" as "a hymn" he was suspected of being tricky, yet that's exactly what it is, an on-knee supplication to a higher power. And Bowie's vocals on the closing cover of 1957 movie theme "Wild Is The Wind" have an intense, epic quality that's at odds with his claims of emotional detachment. Rarely would he sing better.

Station To Station, too, has remained a peak in Bowie's canon. Wagnerian in intent – and accompanied by Bowie's musings on the Third Reich – its highs would shortly be followed by an *"all-time low"*. ●

STATIONTOSTATIONDAVIDBOWIE

CHARTS: UK 5 US 3
PRODUCED BY: DAVID BOWIE, HARRY MASLIN
RECORDED AT: CHEROKEE, RECORD PLANT, LOS ANGELES

8

THE ROLLING STONES
EXILE ON MAIN ST

ROLLING STONES/ATLANTIC, 1972

Rocking in a French basement, the Stones retrench in American music. *By John Robinson*

FIFTY-ONE years on, *Exile On Main St* remains an utterly intoxicating package, not least because the legend of Nellcôte has given it a sense of place that can't help but be evocative. But the album's synopsis – band make record in big French house; decadence ensues – is perhaps misleading. Whether you're asking your butler to open your $499 deluxe "roadcase" edition, or putting the needle down on the first of four worn vinyl sides, when you hear the clanking opening riffs of "Rocks Off" and the speedy rock'n'roll of "Rip This Joint" you are inescapably in that basement, the sweat running down the walls.

Yet while those two tracks (and a few important others, including "Happy", "Soul Survivor" and "Ventilator Blues"; let's not forget "Casino Boogie" and "*kissing cunt in Cannes*...") emanate from Nellcôte sessions, *Exile*'s reach extends far beyond the Riviera: to Mick Jagger's country retreat, Stargroves, to Olympic Studios, even to an unpromising lock-up in Bermondsey where tapes full of usable material were discovered, seemingly accidentally.

The point being, while we've come to think of *Exile* as a record virtually inseparable from its backstory, the album's true setting isn't Nellcôte, France, and tax exile, but America – one way or another, where The Rolling Stones had always been. Practically speaking, they coped with their present French residence by buying linguaphone records and eating hamburgers. Musically, faced with an alien environment, they retrenched and buried themselves further in the American music they knew. In a way, it was no departure at all, but a kind of digging in.

Over its four sides, *Exile* travels widely in America and its music, to the country music of Bakersfield, to the blues and gospel of the Deep South, and the rock'n'roll of Chuck Berry's St Louis. It aligns itself to the origin of the blues (Robert Johnson's "Stop Breaking Down"), and to American current affairs of the day (the 1970 demo "Bent Green Needles" became the Angela Davis homage "Sweet Black Angel"). When The Rolling Stones toured in 1972, supported by Stevie Wonder and gospel singer Dorothy Norwood. it seemed less like a promotional tour, more a pilgrimage to sites of historical importance.

Exile On Main St also became an American record by necessity. Accompanied by a roster of leading session players – Dr John recruited backing singers and brought his own percussion player Didymus– over a winter spent overdubbing in Los Angeles, continuity and lustre was brought to these well-journeyed, slightly war-torn tracks. Though the album is sometimes thought of as Keith's French record, it's equally Mick Jagger's Los Angeles one. This is the product of a partnership, albeit an odd one, at its most felicitous. *Exile* is jet-set and low life, aristocrat and bohemian – specifically a product of the complementary qualities of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards.●

CHART POSITION: UK 1 US 1
PRODUCED BY: JIMMY MILLER
RECORDED AT: NELLCÔTE, FRANCE, STARGROVES, OLYMPIC, SUNSET SOUND, LA

On the couch: Jagger in May, 1972

"I don't want to be rude..."

...But MICK JAGGER turns a press event to promote *Exile On Main St* into a state of the union address, discoursing on the Stones' place in the scheme of things, their recording methods – and their "survivor" status. "It's 'orrible to be the grand old men," he tells Michael Watts

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

MELODY MAKER 20.05.72

MICK Jagger is late, of course. But then does anyone expect him to ever arrive at appointments on time? A chick who was his secretary once told me: "If he says he'll be there on Tuesday at two o'clock he'll be there at exactly that time – a week later." Its great moody. But in their heart of hearts journalists like the game of cat and mouse. Even if they're sometimes not the cat.

But... "Only got back from New York yesterday and I'm still feelin' zonked." Jagger bips like some conquering prince across the expensively white, fleecy carpet in the capacious office of the managing director of WEA Records (alias Kinney, alias Warner Brothers).

He glances at the surroundings, sniffs and then flips open his can of beer. It's not lost on him that several years back this same office belonged to Andrew Oldham. My, how time flies.

The beer, the big bowl of crisps and the large plate of brown sandwiches are provided on the table. For this Tuesday afternoon he's required to perform before an audience of cassette mics and scribbling biros.

"Interviews? Naaah!" he replies in that comic Cockney accent. "I've 'ad six months of 'em in LA, 'aven't I?"

He sees the photographer shaping up. "Gonna 'ave me pitcher taken, then?" He flicks his hand through his hair and sits forward on the leather sofa. You can see him quite unconsciously reacting in his face and body to the lens. As ever, he's compulsive viewing. He's talking about the music scene in the States. "Ah," he says, grimacing, "the difference is there's no poppy thing there, it's all rock."

What about the David Cassidys, I said. "Naaaaah, there's only 'im, and 'e don't sell records." The tone of disdain is heavy. "I've been listening to Humble Pie over there and they're great, they're really heavy players. And (Latin rock group also signed to Kinney) Malo, that's a good band."

And T.Rex? He hesitates, his mouth screwing up at the corners.

"I dunno... 'E's all right. I don't wanna be rude about the band; I dunno... it all depends what standard you're judging them by. When I saw 'em in LA. I thought the best bit was the acoustic numbers, when he just sat there with his guitar. It was great. But the band! Y'see, there's no pop in LA, no teeny-bop. You can get away with it up to a point. Marc Bolan can get away with it, but there's only him. If you don't have a good rhythm section forget it. You gotta be reasonable, man; to play in front of 15,000 people, like there was at the Palladium. In the old teeny-bop days you didn't 'ave to play very long. S'matter of fact, I don't think he did."

He pulled hard on his beer, then resumed.

"I dunno, I don't listen to rock and roll music nowadays. There's nothing much I listen to except for gospel music, maybe. Have you heard of Dorothy Morrison (sic, actually Norwood)? She's gonna be on the Southern part of our American tour, doing Albuquerque and such. She sends ➢

THE INNER SLEEVE ...INSIDE THE ALBUM

us these great letters, endin' with 'the Lord be with you' and all that. She's really sweet."

He went off into a long explanation of one of her songs, "The Singing Slave", sounding unaccustomedly excited. Then he had another thought.

"John McLaughlin! I like 'im. The things McLaughlin does are fucking great. God, I remember him in the old days. I used to see him leaning against the pillars in the Marquee, stoned out of 'is 'ead."

He made the appropriate motion, as if he were holding a guitar.

"But I like the stuff he did with Miles Davis, which is the other rock band I listen to."

By a chain process, the conversation arrived at the name of (violinist) Don Harris. It seemed he played on the new album: "He played a few notes, and I liked it, but the rest of 'em said, 'Oh no, oh no'."

There was Dr John, too, "doing some great stuff." None of that went down, either. But then, there appears to be some idea that there's not much of Mick Jagger on the album as well.

Not so, he says sharply, his lower lip jutting out in alarming fashion.

"I was there for a lot of the time in France. I think I was there for at least three of the basic tracks."

And what about France? "Ugh, I didn't enjoy it at all, fucking drag it was."

His expression of disgust is comic.

"Everyone else liked it. But it was too hot, and the fucking froggies are thieves. Thieves. The only place that's nice there is right out in the country, but you've got to get there. I suppose it was okay 'cause we were really thrown together. If you think the album's good then it wasn't a waste of time."

The album *Exile On Main St*, should have been out by now, but they've put it back to May 26. It's down to Allen Klein, he says. That was why he was in New York: "He claimed he had two tracks on it. We said we were gonna pay him, but it wasn't enough."

A settlement has now been reached. "Let this be a warning to all up-and-coming English guitar players," he adds, wagging his finger. Insouciant was the right word.

We talk about the Stones' albums since *Satanic Majesties*. If this one is really boogying, he says, the last one was 'a bit London'. "It should've been called 'Too Long In London'," he mutters.

I tell him I think the albums have become successively better since *Beggars Banquet*. He shrugs. "Did you know," he replied, "that *Beggars Banquet* and *Let It Bleed* were recorded around the same time?

"And that there are always tracks not used on one album carried over to the next, like 'Sister Morphine', 'Sweet Virginia' and 'Shine A Light' on the new album are both from the *Sticky Fingers* period." There's 50 hours as well of unreleased material, which he thinks they're going to put out.

Looking back, didn't he think *Satanic Majesties* was a little inconclusively experimental – the Stones' version of *Sgt Pepper*? Frankly, he didn't.

"*Satanic Majesties* was the mood of the times. You can't play or write outside the mood of the times, unless you live on a mountain – and even in the South of France I wasn't that out of it I couldn't get the *Melody Maker*. In those times it was flowers, beads and stars on yer face, that's what it was. In fact, I'm rather fond of that album, and I wouldn't mind doing something like that again."

So between him and Richards he was the more experimentally inclined?

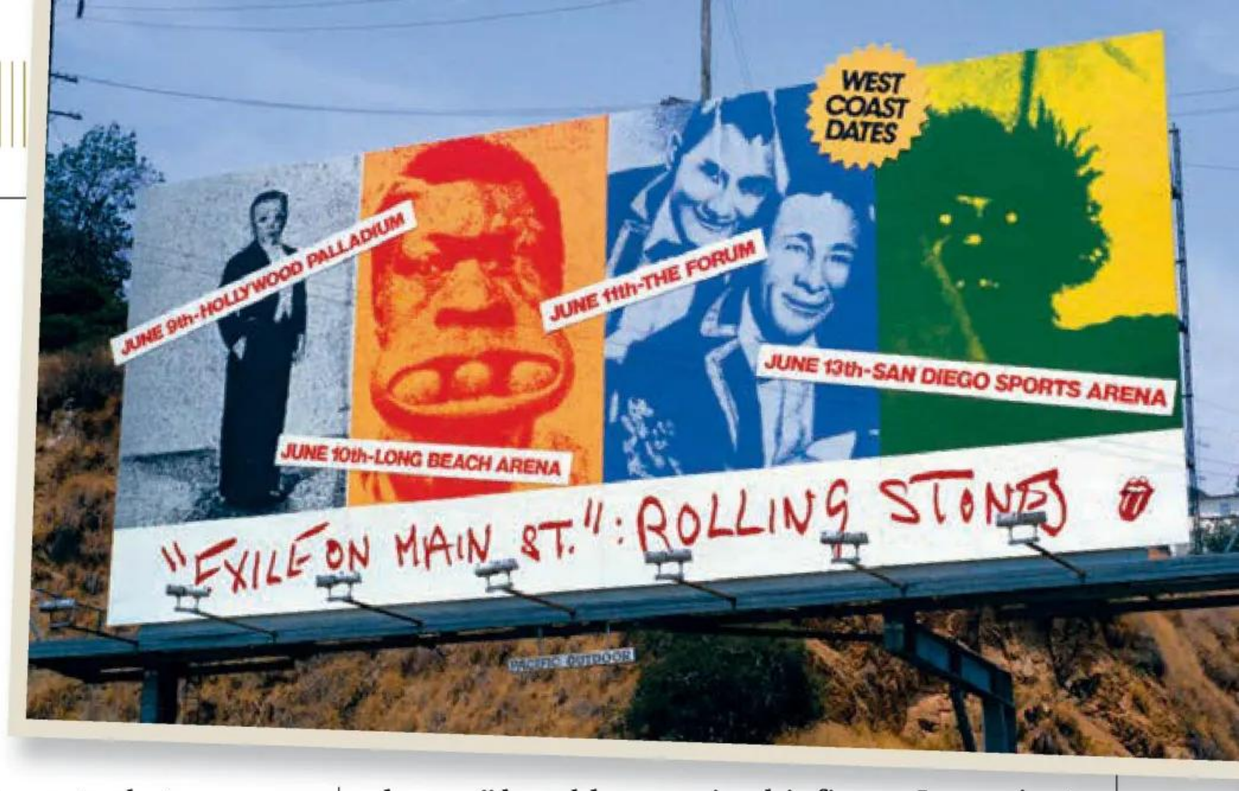
"Well, in a partnership one of you has to be. I'm just as much a rock'n'roller as Keith, but one of yer has to be that way else it'd be too much for people to take."

I wondered why they hadn't both written outside the song-writing partnership. Naaaah, that was just an ego thing, he snorted.

"I don't like people saying 'this one is mine!'. It doesn't matter what anyone fucking says. Then you get in the position of wanting to be known for your greatness. As long as you can work with someone... you've got to 'ave someone to bounce off. You can't bounce off yer old lady like you can yer songwriter."

I said I'd heard it took them ages to write a number. He looked sideways at me: "'Ooo you 'earing this from, then? You gettin' these impressions from out of the air?" He grinned at his sarcasm. "It's balls. No, I write 'undreds every day. Writing 'em all the time, I am."

There was also an impression, materialising out of thin air, that he liked to go in the studio with everything planned, or at least worked upon, "Ah, well that's right, whereas Keith prefers to be more spontaneous. That's our only disagreement." He chewed on the thought.



With Keith Richards at Heathrow Airport, London, May 26, 1972

EVENING STANDARD/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

In Saint-Tropez, France, May 1971. Jagger married Bianca Pérez-Mora Macías in the town later that month

"No, I wouldn't call it spontaneous if you've been there for 10 hours on one riff."

He made a face of mock disgust. "'E just goes in there with a riff and if nothing 'appens he goes back the next day. It's all right for 'im. I have to write the tune!"

There were songs, though, that they wrote independently. Like 'Sympathy For The Devil'? "Yeah." He nodded disinterestedly. "I wrote that – but it's a bit of a bore going through who wrote all the songs 'cos I have to think about it. 'Sympathy For The Devil', that was a big drag that song." Because of its connotations at Altamont? "Not really. It's all these young rock'n'roll singers who come up to yer and say, 'Are you still into that devil shit?'"

The naughty reputation again – black magic, sex and drugs? Well, he said, there were only a few references to drugs on this new record. This was a very undruggy album for the Stones. There was something about speed, and one line about 'cough mixture'.

"That's a heavy aspirin song," he mumbled, like some Mile End skinhead. Christ, he's cracking up me and the photographer. I said I'd like to clear up a point, and asked him why he deliberately appeared to mix down his vocals. On "Tumbling Dice", for instance, the words were often lost. For the first time he began to look concerned.

"I think they used the wrong mix with that," he said slowly to himself. "I'm sure they did. I dunno..." He looked up. "Well, with the fast ones I really like me voice to be part of the band, but with the slow ones I generally like it upfront a bit. I think it all started in the Andrew Oldham days, when I couldn't really sing." He laughed. "He mixed it down so I wouldn't get big-headed. It's a matter of tradition."

"I'm learning all the time. You do, if you keep your eyes open"

By now Jagger seemed to have warmed to the idea of an interview, so I put to him the concept of the Stones, like The Who, being survivors of the early-'60s rock scene in Britain.

"Ugh, it's 'orrible," he exploded, "to be the Grand Old Men. If all this talk gets any worse I'll be getting another band. I dunno why, but it's not nice to be asked that question. It makes us sound like survivors from a holocaust.

"I s'pose I should be grateful that I survived the Swinging Blue Jeans era, but that was the era before us I always believed. I never felt I was part of it, the Swinging Blue Jeans and that, doing me Top 20 hits every evenin' on stage. Whenever I used to see them play they were just all them, standing in line together, doing their hits. I think they were something else. We played in a different way."

There was the question, too, about whether they appealed to the young teenage T.Rex audience. "Aw, I don't have to do everything twice!" he shot back. "We don't have to go back to those people. Why," he looked sardonic, "some of our audience are much younger than I am. Many of the kids who dig us in America are 15 years old. Christ, in Italy they're nine! Here it's students. That's who The Who and Zeppelin get as well.

"Naaaah, there's nothing happening 'ere. The music is negligible, it's all nothing. There's a lack of originality and that's why I don't care about it. I'm not interested in going back to small English towns and turning on the 10-year-olds. I've done all that.

"We've always has a much older audience than that here anyway. We played to the Richmond art school lot, and they were 18 to 21. I've considered our audience to be students, and that's who was there when we played Manchester, Newcastle and the rest on that English tour last year."

What would he do if he decided to jack in the musical business? Films?

"If I jacked that in I'd jack it all in. I've been wanting to jack it in for years. But, I dunno." He hesitated. "I'd like to do something completely different. There's too much pressure being in a group: if I don't wanna do something, they do and vice versa. I'd like to take a year off and study."

Study? "Yeah." Back to LSE? "Naaaah. I've got a few projects." He looked reticent. "I think it's all just talk," he said finally. ●

REG LANCASTER/DAILY EXPRESS/GETTY IMAGES

7

DAVID BOWIE
THE RISE AND FALL OF ZIGGY STARDUST AND THE SPIDERS FROM MARS

RCA, 1972

A cautionary tale about rock'n'roll stardom, essayed by a singer going supernova.

By Alastair McKay

THE Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars can be viewed as a flawed concept album about a doomed rock'n'roller or an outer space opera featuring an extra-terrestrial god. But in its simplest interpretation, it is an essay on fame and a stunning piece of wish-fulfilment. Bowie began *Ziggy*... shortly after the release of the acclaimed but modest-selling *Hunky Dory*. Twelve months later both LPs had set up near-permanent residence in the UK's Top 10. After years of public indifference, Bowie had become his creation, the ultimate rock'n'roll star.

The idea was apocalyptic, with the action set five years before the end of the world. Natural resources were running out, and Ziggy, the rock'n'roll anti-hero, discovered that he was unable to play, and had nothing to say. Hope arrives with the prospective appearance of "*the infinites*", black-hole jumpers, prophesied by Ziggy, who is rewarded for his prescience by being torn to pieces by the visitors while performing onstage.

Such is the architecture of *Ziggy Stardust*..., though the album works just as well as a crazy cosmic jive. "Five Years" is a bit Huxley, a bit *Twilight Zone*, a bit Burroughs. The newsreader, his face wet with tears, has just announced that the earth is dying. The narrator wanders into the street, surveying the chaos. "*A cop knelt and kissed the feet of a priest, and a queer threw up at the sight of that*". From here, matters become even weirder, even more wired. "Soul Love" is a pained reflection on loss and loneliness; "Moonage Daydream", first recorded for Bowie's protégés Arnold Corns, is pure space madness, appearing as it does to tell the story of an act of intergalactic sex with an alligator.

Ronson is an Apollo moonshot Duane Eddy; Keith to Bowie's Mick. But this is Bowie's show. "Starman" boils his religious ideas about God being "an energy form" into transcendent pop – not your average Top 10 chart material in summer '72. On "Star'" – a saloon bar piano and a rattling guitar riff – Ziggy unfolds his manifesto of rock'n'roll as a transformative force. The glam thunder of "Hang On To Yourself" sounds like the blueprint for punk, while on "Ziggy Stardust" itself, the metallic riffs melt and Ziggy's brain begins to fry. "Suffragette City" is a perfect retro rock'n'roll tune with the urgency of a siren and the majestic "Rock'N'Roll Suicide", a shamelessly dramatic curtain closer, is a song made for the high concept of Bowie's stage shows. As a piece of sheer rock theatre, it remains unsurpassed.

Where does that leave *Ziggy Stardust*? Well, it's an adolescent fantasy, a time capsule, a mix of pulp literature and overstimulation. In that sense; classic rock'n'roll. But it's also the sound of Bowie looking over the edge of the precipice and deciding whether he wants to be a star. ●

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 1 US 75
PRODUCED BY: DAVID BOWIE, KEN SCOTT
RECORDED AT: TRIDENT, LONDON

6

ROXY MUSIC
FOR YOUR PLEASURE

ISLAND, 1973

Creative tension between Ferry and Eno births an inspirational, essential album. *By Jon Dale*

IN 1973, when Roxy Music unleashed *For Your Pleasure*, they were already identified with the first wave of glam rock, having made a splash with their self-titled debut the previous year. Ferry understood the nature of the scene and its obsession with surface, with mutability: the ever changeable you was glam's truest and most irreducible subject. "In Every Dream Home A Heartache" and the album it anchors is fascinated by the transitory nature of identity, a common enough theme in the early 1970s but rarely enacted with as much panache as on *For Your Pleasure*.

Rather than condemn the scene for its superficiality, Roxy Music celebrate that quality, which lends even its most ominous moments – the intro to "Dream Home", for example, or the glitter-dirge of "Strictly Confidential" – an inviting self-awareness, as though he's pulling back the curtain to show us pop's innermost machinery. "Editions Of You", which features one of Ferry's most sardonic performances, imagines ordering up a new version of an old lover, as though flipping through a catalogue, while opener "Do The Strand", arguably their most popular song, runs through a list of passé dance moves before exhorting listeners to do the Strand. The fact that it doesn't exist is the whole point; it's a craze as old as forever even if it hasn't quite arrived yet. "*The Sphynx and Mona Lisa, Lolita and Guernica,*" Ferry insists, "*did the Strand!*"

Ferry, fresh off the success of their self-titled debut and the inter-album hit "Pyjamarama", might have viewed his bandmates in terms of his inflatable lovers: disposable and interchangeable. Already the band had undergone tremendous upheaval in its lineup, especially among bass players. Founding member Graham Simpson departed the group after their debut, and his replacement, Rik Kenton, lasted barely one single before leaving. The spot would be filled by a platoon of studio and tour musicians for the duration of the band's life.

Even more notorious is the departure of synth player and mad scientist Brian Eno, just four months after the release of *For Your Pleasure*. Eno, like Clapton six years and a lifetime before, was considered a god. Journalists pursued interviews with him rather than with the frontman. Audiences chanted his name loud enough to disrupt their live performances. Groupies favoured Eno's company over that of the other members. Frustrated to be so completely upstaged, Ferry canned the sideman and soldiered on as the undisputed king of Roxy Music.

It's tempting to overstate the tension between Ferry and Eno as a creative force on *For Your Pleasure*, especially considering their wildly different approaches to recording. Ferry was focused and diligent, while Eno favored a looser, more experimental approach as befits an artist who still considers the studio an instrument. The album suggests a growing divide between two musicians moving in opposite directions, with the first side emphasising taut, vocal-driven songs and the second side indulging endless synth tinkerings and tape manipulations.

Still, Roxy Music emerge on *For Your Pleasure* as a band united in a single mission. Namely to take something as essentially disposable as pop music and use it as the foundation for an album that remains indispensable 50 years later. ●

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 4 US 193
PRODUCED BY: CHRIS THOMAS, JOHN ANTHONY, ROXY MUSIC
RECORDED AT: AIR LONDON

5

DAVID BOWIE
HUNKY DORY
RCA, 1971

His first masterpiece. *By Stephen Troussé*

LIKE many of his best records, *Hunky Dory* captures a David Bowie in transition, in a moment of becoming. But perhaps because it was the first time he really worked out the magic combination, first dreamed up such an authoritative version of himself, it's easy to see that it might just be his definitive album. Bowie famously wrote "Life On Mars" in revenge, or out of frustration, for failing to have written "My Way" (when his lame translation of the original "Comme d'Habitude" was passed over in favour of Paul Anka's). But it's actually "Changes", first track, Side One, that is his enduring signature tune.

The cover captures the moment immaculately. If you study Brian Ward's full shoot from 1971, Bowie doesn't look too different from the Beckenham Bacall draped across the cover of *The Man Who Sold The World*. Yet the final pic, cropped tight to a headshot, hair pulled back, and delicately colourised by George Underwood, suggests a timelord caught mid-regeneration, on his way from pre-Raphaelite princeling to Warhol icon (via expressionist starlet). It's as though the colour and contrast on his career are being dialled up (on the way to Mick Rock's bleached out 1973 video for "Life On Mars?"), and the picture has caught the precise moment black and white turns to colour, between Kansas and Oz, Haddon Hall and the Factory floor.

It was a triumph of the will. During the sessions for *The Man Who Sold The World*, Tony Visconti had grown exasperated with Bowie's slackness, his mooning around with Angie as studio time ran out and vocals remained unrecorded. By contrast, *Hunky Dory* had been painstakingly plotted, worked out alone at home on piano as Bowie patiently waited for new manager Tony DeFries to extricate him from his deal with Mercury.

Bowie had made his first trip across the Atlantic in February on a short promo tour, and maybe it was the sheer scale, madness and wonder of the USA at the hungover turn of the decades that spurred his ambition, gave him a real taste of a world/stage larger than post-hippy London. The magnificent, magisterial "Life On Mars?" is the song of someone humiliated by the gap between Technicolor spectacle and suburban sunken dreams, and inevitably evokes Bowie's own failure to launch, the "*million dead-end streets*" he'd dawdled down since the countdown of "Space Oddity" back in 1969.

In this respect the supremely self-confident pizzazz of the songcraft and arrangements, the very album title itself, are extreme wishful thinking, putting a brave face on what are still some very troubled, conflicted songs. ●

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 3 US -
PRODUCED BY: DAVID BOWIE, KEN SCOTT
RECORDED AT: TRIDENT

4

BOB DYLAN

BLOOD ON THE TRACKS

COLUMBIA, 1975

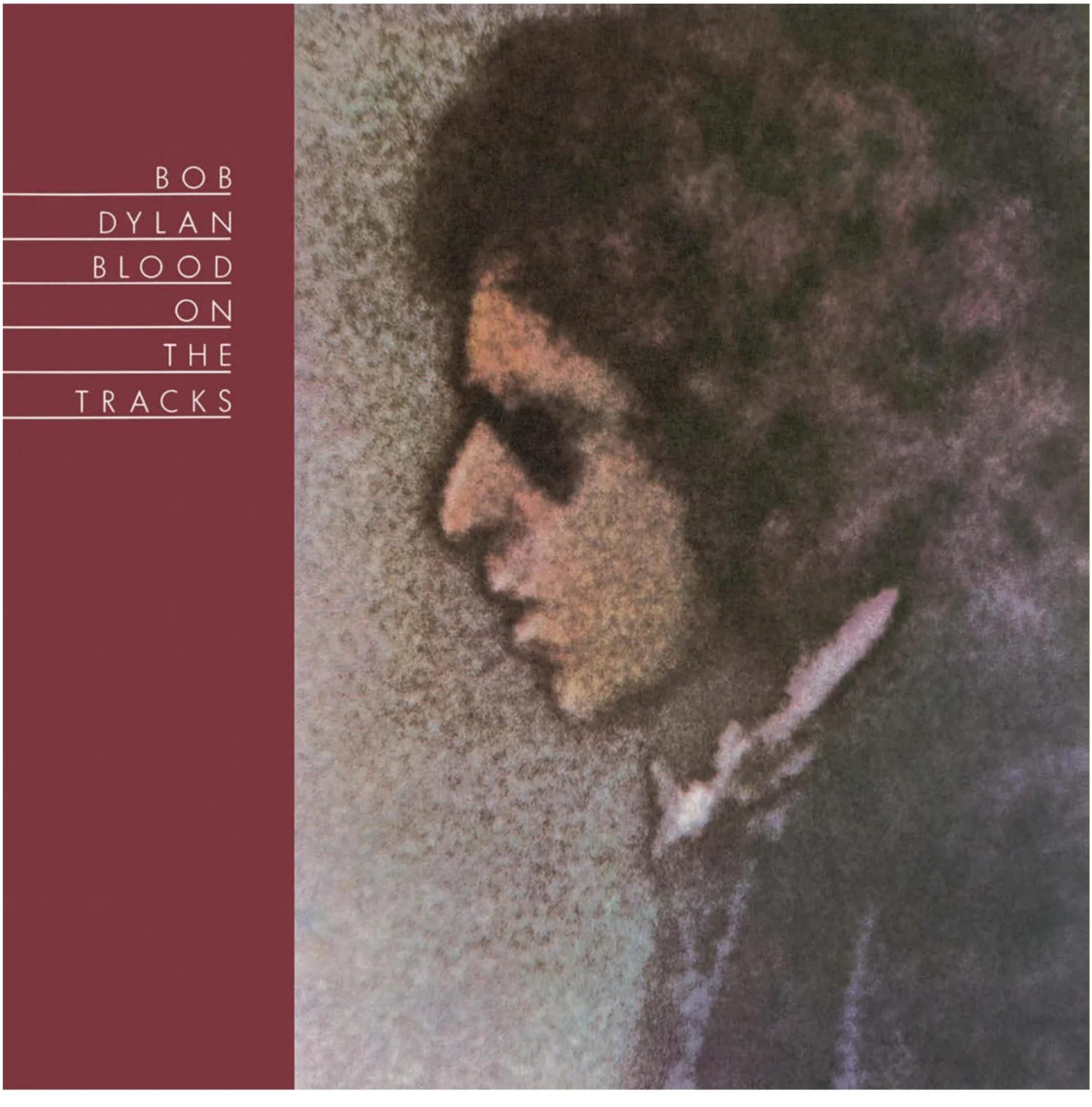
The death throes of a marriage and a new masterpiece that transcends time. *By Andy Gill*

THE hints of marital discord in *Planet Waves* were confirmed with *Blood On The Tracks*, still regarded four decades later as the definitive "break-up album". By 1974, Dylan and his wife Sara seemed to be drifting apart, she in Malibu, he in New York, where he signed on for a course of lessons with art teacher Norman Raeben that would have a profound effect on his life. Raeben's ideas led him to a more interesting grasp of time. Rather than viewing narrative in strictly linear manner, he was now able to telescope past, present and future together to offer a multiple-aspect apprehension of events.

This was immediately effective in the new songs he began writing, most notably "Tangled Up In Blue", where time, place and aspect shifted from verse to verse, like jump-cuts in a movie. Seven verses fly by, one's gaze allowed to alight just briefly on each scene, as notions of past, present and future lose their grip on our perception. The effect is akin to an out-of-body experience: the sense of detachment from reality leads to insight into that reality.

At his Minnesota farm, he set about using his newfound technique to help write the songs that would make up *Blood On The Tracks*, letting his misgivings about the parlous state of his marriage percolate through his new narrative filters. Despite Dylan's subsequent protestations, it's hard not to read the album as relating to his marital problems, whether it's the cathartic rage of "Idiot Wind" or the wistful paean to an old flame "If You See Her, Say Hello", where Dylan's most poignant vocal performance is heightened by aching tints of mandolin.

But it's the skill with which events are transmuted through metaphor and allegory that gives the album its power. In the crepuscular account of a doomed one-night stand, "Simple Twist Of Fate", it's again the conflict between art and life that drives matters, in particular the way that the artist's detached, observational imperative inevitably damages relationships. The narrator of "Shelter From The Storm", likewise, is a haunted figure plucked from chaos by a salvatory, Madonna-like figure: as the story shifts from personal intimacy to mythic allegory, one becomes ever more convinced that the Taoist balance of wild-spirited male and nurturing female at the heart of the song is derived from bitter personal experience. By contrast, "You're A Big Girl Now" is a more generalised evocation, a masterpiece of emotional subtlety tracking the increments of regret and desolation afflicting an abandoned heart as it becomes more desperately aware of its solitude. *Blood On The Tracks* became Dylan's fastest and biggest-selling album to that point, the confirmation that his '60s genius had not evaporated. ●



HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 4 US 1
PRODUCED BY: BOB DYLAN, PHIL RAMONE
RECORDED AT: A&R, NEW YORK, SOUND 80, MINNEAPOLIS

3

MARVIN GAYE
WHAT'S GOING ON
TAMLA MOTOWN, 1971

Marvin's personal/political masterpiece.
By Alastair McKay

FIFTY-TWO years on from its initial release, Marvin Gaye's masterpiece still sounds like an argument wrapped in a dream. Structurally, it has the shape and logic of a sermon, sounding both urgent and relevant to the turmoil of the moment. At the same time, its rhythms, and the timbre of Gaye's voice, reach for something universal; a kind of peace, the reassurance of timelessness. The album is a religious thing, but also an inquiry into the notion of faith.

Gaye had a lot of questions in 1971. Some of these were personal, some were political. Many of them inhabited the part of the Venn where the personal and the political overlap, a voguish idea in the late-1960s, and the seed of what later became identity politics. Who are they to judge us, simply 'cos our hair is too long? War is hell, when will it end? When will people start getting together again? Are things getting better, like the newspaper said? Who's willing to try to save the world? Who is to blame?

Some understanding of Gaye's state of mind is instructive. His tempestuous marriage to Anna Gordy (the sister of Motown boss Berry) was one obvious complication. Gaye was grieving the tragic death of his singing partner Tammi Terrell. His brother Frankie had returned from the Vietnam war, a changed man. Gaye himself was disillusioned with celebrity. He was depressed, and had toyed, fruitlessly, with the possibility of becoming a football player.

The flow of the album also disguises its extremities. The conversational call and response of "Save The Children" s gently rendered. The singer sounds almost defeated, until strings and sax usher in his cries of "*Save the babies!/Save the babies!*" Such is the mesmeric quality of the music that the apocalyptic tone of the lyrics seems incidental, but Gaye is mired in biblical pestilence. "*There'll come a time when the world won't be singing*," he croons, "*flowers won't grow... bells won't be ringing*".

Without Gaye's vocal command, such sentiments might sound cranky, but relief comes quickly in "God Is Love". The album returns to earth with "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)", a solo composition by Gaye which describes a world of polluted air and poisoned seas, of overpopulation and radiation. Musically, the celestial sweetness is foregrounded, while the turbulence of the saxophones offers a disturbing undertone, and the song ends with a psychedelic whimper.

"Right On" takes the mood forward, though its roll call of contradictions (peace versus hatred, "*enjoying ourselves*" versus drowning in "*the sea of happiness*") is given full expression before Gaye offers resolution with a vision of pure love which is, by the sound of his voice, both a sexual and an ecumenical matter. The album closes with the sublime "Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)" with lyrics about the "*have-nots*" written by James Nyx, who also worked as a janitor in Motown's offices.

As an LP, *What's Going On* is perfect. It is both sublimely mellow and full of jagged extremes. Gaye touches on conflict, prejudice, unemployment, drugs, ecology and other poignant details of "*a world that is destined to die*". Reading through the lyrics now is to acknowledge that 1971 never went away. ●

HIGHEST CHART POSITION:
UK - US 6
PRODUCED BY MARVIN GAYE
RECORDED AT HITSVILLE USA, DETROIT

THE INNER SLEEVE ...INSIDE THE ALBUM

"He's into something new"

Litigation and synthesisers. Dysentery and Iggy Pop. Disguises, Eno and Muzak. From these strange bedfellows comes DAVID BOWIE's mysterious new album *Low*. "He's so full of ideas I have to edit him," Tony Visconti tells Michael Watts. "It's too intense to be around him."

MELODY MAKER 29.01.77

DAVID BOWIE'S last image, as a kind of wasp-waisted performer in a Weimar cabaret, would hardly prepare one for reports of the figure he's currently cutting in Berlin, where he now lives.

It seems that the famous red hair, now returned to its original mousey colour, has been scalped to a crew cut, that he's grown the curving moustache of a prosperous bürgermeister, and, having put on some weight, and wearing a cap pulled down low, he spends his time frequenting both the cultural establishments and working-men's haunts of that city.

More Günter Grass than Joel Grey, he obviously continues in his fascination with all things German that reached notorious proportions early last summer in his well-publicised speech about fascism.

None of this will much surprise keen Bowie watchers, who have observed his bewildering metamorphoses from an acoustic performer and mime artist to an ambiguous commentator upon rock stardom with *Ziggy*, a doom-mongerer with *Diamond Dogs*, a moon-age soul singer with *Young Americans* and *Station To Station*, and the star of Nicolas Roeg's futuristic art film, *The Man Who Fell To Earth*.

It's not difficult to see why Bowie is the most interpreted, and the most reviled, rock star of this generation. He's consistent only in the diversity of his actions. He doesn't respond in the ways expected of rock stars when each tour he presents a different public face, and no two albums are truly alike.

Eclectic to a fault, unlike all other major rock performers he has wilfully neglected to define his own oeuvre, beyond reflecting a certain preoccupation as a lyricist with a technological future and as a musician with mutations of mainstream styles.

While undeniably a stylist, as is borne out by the attractive pastiches of *Pin-Ups*, he has too much artistic substance to justify that as a condemnation. *Diamond Dogs*, for example, despite its musical roughness, seems increasingly to me a classic projection of a lost and rabid society, even though I was indifferent to it when it was released.

Similarly, although I still don't much like a lot of *Young Americans*, and find it rather empty, I can nevertheless appreciate the different perspective he brought to white soul, which at first seemed merely parodic. Perhaps, therefore, much critical distrust of him may have two origins; in his refusal to stand still and be explained, and in the coldness and isolation, the cerebration evident at the heart of his work, which puts off critics and record-buyers who have become accustomed to the warmth and responsiveness of the rock'n'roll tradition, a tradition that he has gone out of his way to usurp.

Of all his records, the new album, *Low* is the most controversial, and right in the target-line of this critical bias. It's radically different from *Station To Station*, because it appear to have been conceived as a 'mood' album. Its creation revolves around the synthesiser; the vocals on the first side are brief, and on the second, which consists of four electronic instrumentals, they are used only as textural aids. Furthermore, the "Mood", even as far as its expressed in whatever lyrics there are, is utterly bleak and depressed, as the album's title would suggest.

Yet for several reasons *Low* strikes me as a remarkable record, and certainly the most interesting Bowie has made. It's so thoroughly contemporary, less in its pessimism, perhaps, though that's deeply relevant to these times, than in its musical concept: the logic of bringing together mainstream pop – in the album's disco bass-and-drums and conventional lyric – and experimental music perfectly indicates what could be the popular art of the advanced society we are moving into, in a way that the Rolling Stones, nay, or even the Sex Pistols, whose music relies totally upon its black-derived rhythms, could not hope to express.

The devices of experimental music are scattered throughout the album – for instance in his employment of phoneticism (on "Warszawa" and "Subterraneans" and the reduction and unspecific nature of language – but in themselves they are not unusual; after all, the German groups like Kraftwerk and Tangerine Dream have also devised superior Muzak, and the synthesiser has long been a staple weapon even in the vulgar hands of ELP.

But it's interesting not only that Bowie is moving across the tracks from the lyric and vocal tradition, unlike these bands, but that he's also an artist who to a large extent has a 'fan' following, far more populist than T. Dream or ELP.

The successful synthesis of popular and experimental music – described by Brian Eno, who played a major role in the making of *Low*, as two parallel mainstreams will more likely be achieved by a popular artist such as Bowie who has a greater understanding of, and intimacy with, the mass audience.

In this context *Low* is quite a daring venture for a performer whose modus operandi, ie the size of his tours and venues, the cost of his albums, etc, is determined by the charts.

TV TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES

Bowie performing "Heroes" on *Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas* TV special, September 11, 1977

THE INNER SLEEVE ...INSIDE THE ALBUM

An artist of the same magnitude, like Stevie Wonder, for example, may have a better appreciation of synthesisers and have more satisfactorily assimilated electronics into (black) pop music, but he's always respected the conservatism of his audience and used this knowledge to enhance his abilities rather than transform the nature of his music.

On the other hand, Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music*, an album which invites some comparison with *Low*, seems like a bizarre aberration, or certainly an eccentricity, because our past experience of him as a deadpan lyricist, often working the theme of decadence, doesn't prepare us to believe in the experiment; moreover, it had limited influence because RCA didn't promote it.

RCA, it appears, have also been dismayed by *Low*. The album should have been out for Christmas (the deadline for its recording was November 16), but RCA executives freaked because they weren't sure how to market it. Some of them thought they had another *Metal Machine Music* on their hands.

There is also a story that Tony DeFries, who managed Bowie during his rise to stardom, and has retained his proprietary manner, tried to have the album stopped on the grounds that there weren't enough vocals and it would damage Bowie's career. All of which has been disproved by Bowie's seemingly automatic entry into the charts.

According to Tony Visconti, the American who co-produced *Low* with Bowie, and who has worked with him since 1967 and "Space Oddity", Bowie was determined to surprise everyone with *Low* out of a fear, irrational though it may appear, of seeming predictable.

"To promote the last two albums he must have done more than 200 shows," says Visconti, whose wife, the former Mary Hopkin, sings briefly on "Sound And Vision". "He was absolutely tired of being RCA's sure thing, and he also felt he was losing his pioneer spirit. David described the album to me as far back as July, because he asked me if I could produce Iggy's album first and then his own, which he said was going to be very revolutionary.

"He was trying to produce Jimmy's [Osterberg, Iggy's real name] album at the Chateau d'Herouville, but he said the engineers were proving hopeless. I told him it was impossible for me, and just to do his best." (The album, in fact, is called *The Idiot*, based upon a painting Bowie found, dating from 1906, of a man who Visconti says bears a striking resemblance to Iggy Pop.)

Visconti, however, was enthusiastic about helping to record what was then being called *New Music Night And Day*, a title designed to express the difference between sides one and two, which in the planning stages was even more radical. Bowie intended both sides to be absolutely contrasting, but the first was meant to be 'raw rock'n'roll', not the strange rockmusak that's resulted, where two of the cuts, "Speed Of Life" and "A New Career In A New Town", even have no vocal at all.

What happened, explains Visconti, was that Bowie then laid down 10 tracks in the style of the first side, and was going to abandon the idea of two different sides but for the event that he developed something of a mental block about the lyrics.

"Ever since *The Man Who Sold The World* he has written the lyrics after the music, but in this case he couldn't come up with more than one verse for some things, which is why a lot of the tracks fade out.

"His mood was far from optimistic when we were recording at the Chateau. It was absolutely the worst. A lot of things were happening to him, and we had a lot of setbacks. For one thing, we found the studio totally useless. The people who now own it don't seem to care. We all came down with dysentery. David and I were in bed for two days.

"Also, he chose the Chateau to get away from all those people in America, but they all found out where he was. He really is too gregarious for his own good, he's too kind, and he just couldn't tell them to fuck off. So we got no work done."

The album was finished, in fact, in a week and a half at Hansa By The Wall, a studio in the old 'West End' of Berlin. They were watched by East German border guards as they recorded.

More distressingly, Bowie was suing his

immediately previous manager, Michael Lippman, in Paris. There were several reasons for the dissolution of their association, but Bowie maintained for one that Lippman pledged he would get the right to score *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, which eventually went to John Phillips.

"Subterraneans", the last track on *Low*, was actually composed for the soundtrack, which Bowie worked on with Paul Buckmaster.

"He was away for about four days in Paris, dealing with this deposition," says Visconti, "and he was absolutely down for that month. I must say I have great respect for him for calling it *Low*, 'cause that's exactly what he was. The reason there are not that much lyrics is that he had absolutely nothing to say; there was nothing outside himself. So I think for the first time in his lyrics he's really saying something about himself."

The decision to persevere with the two-side concept was further promoted during Bowie's absence in Paris when Eno wrote "Warszawa", the piece that begins side two. Bowie apparently said it reminded him of a Polish choir he had heard as a child, and a 'Polish' vocal was added – in reality some phonetic speech slowed down and then speeded up – so that he sounds, in his own phrase, "like a 12-year-old Polish boy glorifying the Socialist state".

Eno's involvement with *Low* was important but not crucial, as has been suggested. He was only at the Chateau for one week in the whole of the September they recorded there, and is on just two of the four tracks on the second side.

Nevertheless, his records, like those of the German groups Tangerine Dream, Neu! and Kraftwerk, had a catalytic effect. Indeed, when Eno got to the Chateau he was astonished to find that both Iggy and Bowie could hum, note for note, *No Pussyfooting*, the electronic album he made with Bob Fripp.

Several of Eno's hypotheses and attitude towards music, such as the artistic potential of Muzak, are shared by Bowie, he feels. Eno, for instance, is approaching the Planned Music Company, which markets Muzak in this country, with a view to producing records for them that are not only environmental but which also express that tension between doubt and certainty that creates art – "ambient music", he calls it, "that works in the same way as nice lighting: it tints the environment".

He's been encouraged in this belief by the commercial success of his own *Discreet Music* on Obscure, low-definition music that is apparently popular at dinner parties; it puts the 'fun' into functional.

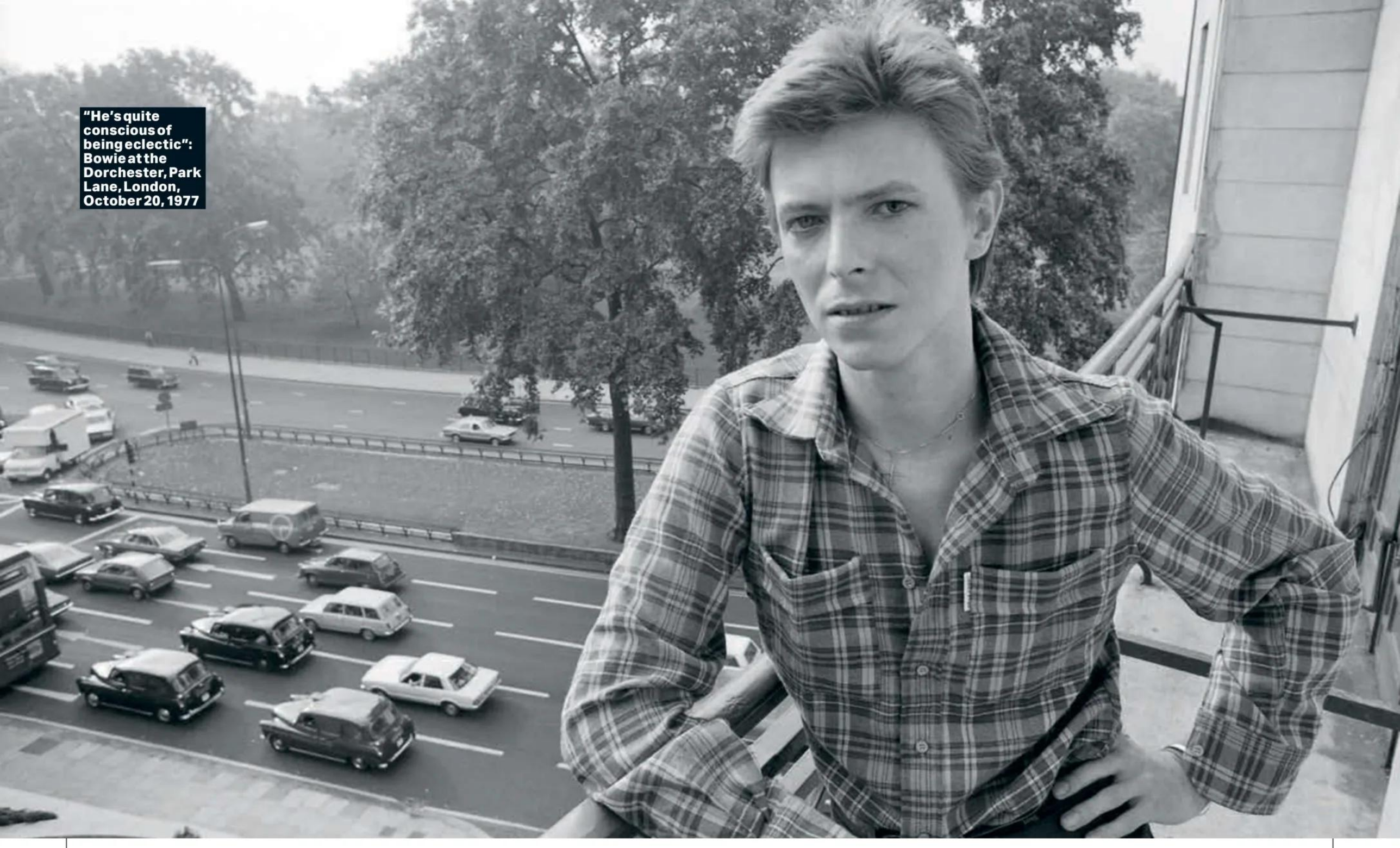
"I think this is something that Bowie is interested in as well," he argues. "The point of using phonetics, I believe, was to get rid of the language element. If you use language you cannot but help lead the mind in a particular way. As soon as there's language it creates a focus, and it's very, very difficult not to accept that as the central point of the piece, with the other instruments ranked, or arranged, round it, supporting it.

"Now if you want to have music that's got a 'drifting' aspect to it, it's very hard to make lyrics that will fit. I think he has just become aware of this problem of focus in a piece of music, of how much you want and how much you don't want. One of the interesting questions that all those German bands brought up was that they produced music that was very unfocal – it had a lot of 'drift' in it, if you like, whereas rock music has traditionally had a lot of 'anchorage'.

"Like myself, he was very impressed by the other tradition; the kind of vocal rock tradition, so the problem of the age, as far as I'm concerned, is to bring those two things together comfortably. That's why the record is experimental.

"When I did *Another Green World* I had a problem because I had some numbers of this 'drifting' nature, and others that were songs. I solved the problem by mixing them all up together, so the dichotomy isn't so evident as if one had put them on separate sides. I could have done it one side as songs and one as instrumentals, and to tell you the truth, the reason I didn't was because I didn't dare.

"I thought, this is gonna be too bizarre to do. I thought it would indicate that I thought these two things to be unrelated to one another. So I admire him for what he did. But I don't think I've had such an influence on him as the press has



"He's quite conscious of being eclectic": Bowie at the Dorchester, Park Lane, London, October 20, 1977

made out, or assumed. It is his album, and he got in touch with me because I think he recognised that I was in a similar position.

"I know he liked *Another Green World* a lot, and he must've realised that there were these two parallel streams of working going on in what I was doing, and when you find someone with the same problem you tend to become friendly with them."

In fact, Eno suspects Bowie strongly influenced his own approach to music concerning the marketing of disposable records, a corollary of his fascination with Muzak.

"He said when he first heard *Discreet Music*, he could imagine in the future that you would go into supermarkets and there would be a rack of 'ambience' records, all in very similar covers.

"And – this is my addition – they would just have titles like 'Sparkling', or 'Nostalgic', or 'Melancholy' or 'Sombre'. They would all be mood titles, and so cheap to buy that you could chuck them away when you didn't want them any more."

Bowie, by all accounts, is said to lead a rigorous intellectual life. According to Visconti, he literally assaults himself with ideas. In Berlin he has been going in art galleries almost every day; his knowledge of art approaches that of a connoisseur, Visconti claims;

"Every time I go there he's into something new. Also, he's the only guy who, when he's on tour, never stays in his hotel room. He always puts on a disguise and goes out onto the streets.

"The last time I was in Berlin we went out to a working-class place, a kind of Hammersmith Palais. And there are all the drag clubs which are quite respectable over there. He really wants to know what people are doing and thinking.

"We can work together because he's a very non-technical person – he probably couldn't change a plug – and I can translate what he wants. I'm a very, very fast worker, so he's not frustrated with me, and I'm an arranger and a musician as well (he plays bass). But he's so full of ideas, if anything, I have to edit him. In fact, it's too intense to be around him for any length of time."

In Berlin he has been going in art galleries almost every day

Eno also pays tribute to his intellectual curiosity, pointing out that Bowie has resisted every encouragement from the music industry not to be interesting.

"In a sense," Eno says, "I think that most of his albums are quite experimental in that they strike me as always being to do with hybridising things. He's quite conscious of being eclectic. *Low* is a transitional record, you see, as most records are by people who are interesting."

Yet Bowie impresses even his friends as being fundamentally detached from people. Certainly he's contemptuous of the music industry and press, but also none of his personal friends, it's said, are musicians, apart from Iggy (whom he now manages) and perhaps his guitarist, Carlos Alomar, with whom he has a very good working relationship (Visconti says that "Fame" grew out of Alomar's riff to a version of Springsteen's "It's Hard To Be A Saint In The City", which Bowie was producing in Philadelphia for a three-piece – including Ava Cherry and Warren Peace – called the Astronettes. Because of business hassles, the group never appeared on record.)

Visconti is one of his oldest friends, and he maintains that Bowie takes pride in being emotionless. "I've seen him at the edge of despair, but as far as marriage and love are concerned, he claims to be above it. Everything goes to his head and not his heart."

"Be My Wife", therefore, whose emotional message could not be more explicit, would appear to be an unusually unguarded moment in the career of an artist who has generally heeded that dictum of Arnold Wesker: that an action taken without intellect is flabby and sentimental.

Whether *Low* is yet another role for the cracked actor, or, as I think, an inspired attempt at creating truly modern rock music – or even, as is possible, both of those options – it cannot be called flabby. At the very least, though Bowie may be a snake, his twists and turns are as extraordinary to behold as the periodic sheddings of his appearance.

In the meantime, he continues to live abroad, perhaps for the next two years, and perhaps still in Berlin, a walled-in city that is stuffed with all the benefits of civilised culture. Berlin lacks only one attribute but that a major one: the beauty of nature. And where in David Bowie will you find that? ●

MIKE MALONEY/MIRRORPIX/GETTY IMAGES

2

DAVID BOWIE
LOW
RCA, 1977

Bowie escapes from LA, disappears into Europe, and invents the future. *By Damien Love*

THE sci-fi movie of *Low* could have been titled 'Escape From LA'. Bowie cited it as a continuation of *Station To Station*, and echoes do persist. But *Low* is far more of a reaction to the magnificent neuroses of *Station To Station*. It is Bowie's flight from rock to art, from Hollywood canyons to the European canon.

If *Low* is a sci-fi movie, it is Chris Marker's *La Jetée*. It comes in odd fragments, stunned and frozen moments, loaded with sadness for the future, anxious nostalgia for the present, reluctant mistrust of the past. At first, it seems chill, stark, remote. Eventually, it is revealed as enormously emotional.

And then you notice its weird, buried humour. After all, as well as mystery, the cover presents that amazingly corny "low profile" pun on Bowie's retreat. The gag came late: the album's name was changed so close to the last minute that initial cassettes went out still labelled with the original title, *New Music Night And Day*. RCA's advertising slogan is another hangover: "Two sides of Bowie you've never heard before".

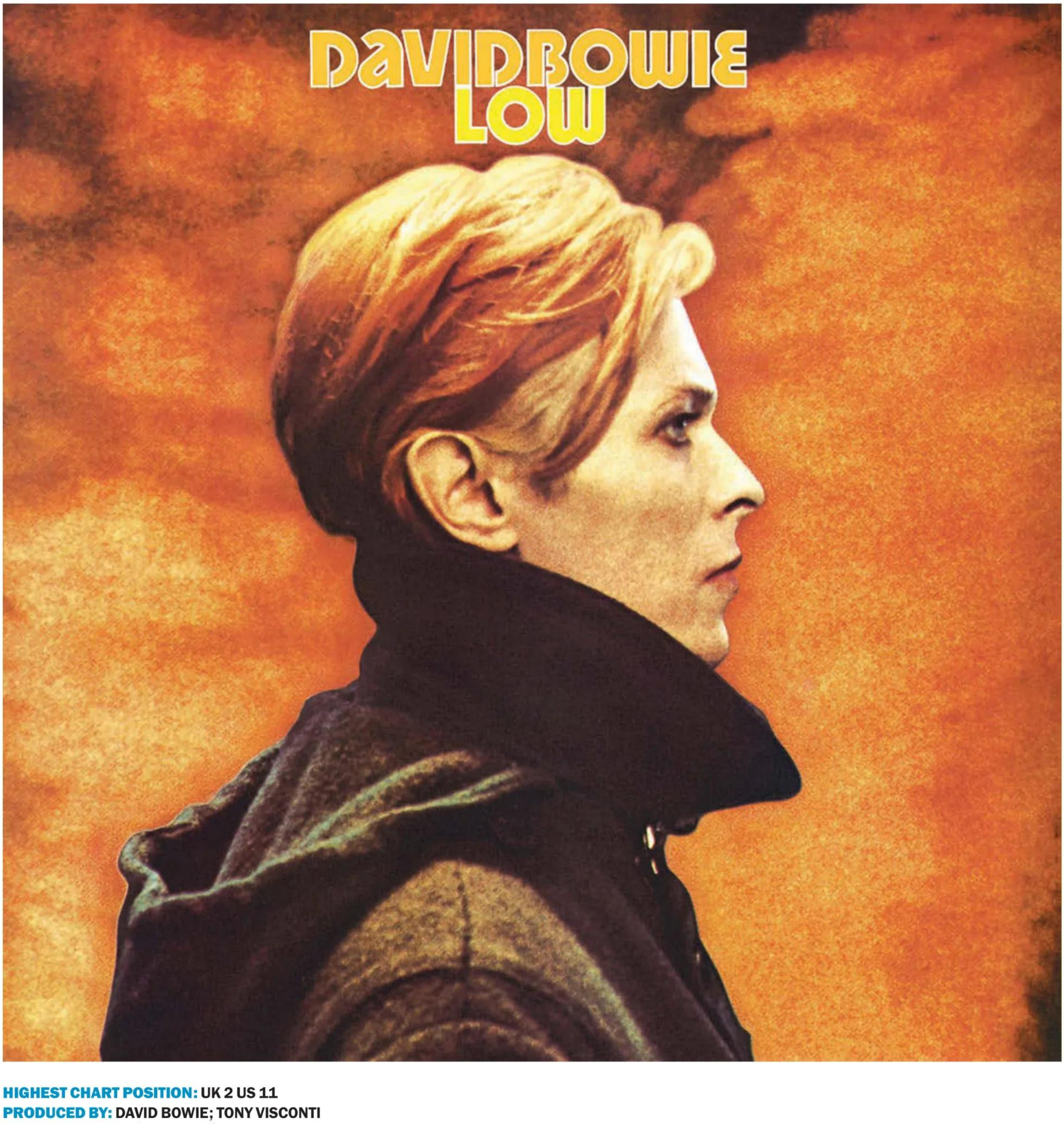
The strapline reflected the label's perplexity at the album, but it's a perfect fit. "Speed Of Life" fades in alarmingly, and is over almost before you realise it is unprecedented for Bowie: an instrumental. When words do come, hot on the filthy heels of Carlos Alomar's poisonous riff in "Breaking Glass", they are blunter, stranger, more cut-up than anything before.

A funk fuzz fragment, "Breaking Glass" opens *Low*'s strange series of rooms. Inside: barrelhouse piano, occult rituals, a girl with grey eyes. Macabre chambers... hotel garages, no wonder he's always on the move. Tony Visconti has recalled Bowie was having difficulty writing – like "Speed Of Life", "New Career" was originally intended to have words – but what happens on *Low* goes beyond writer's block. *Low* finds Bowie profoundly suspicious of songwriting methods he'd built his career on. 'Fear Of Narrative' is another plausible alternative title.

On Side Two – the famous "instrumental side" that isn't instrumental at all – Bowie leaves his rooms and goes out into new towns. Marked by Eno's ambience and minimalists like Steve Reich and Philip Glass, the songs are textural sketches of Iron Curtain cities rusting after the rain, as refracted through Bowie's troubled interior landscape.

"Warszawa" calls up the mood Bowie felt in the Polish capital during a brief train stop in 1976. "Art Decade" presents another Low pun, suggesting deco splendours rotting into weedy, pastoral decay. The chiming "Weeping Wall", with Bowie wailing after "Scarborough Fair", conjures both with Jerusalem's ancient western wall and the new wall scarring the city that forced Jews out. Finally, the record's most moving moment, "Subterraneans", is Bowie's imaginary, ruminative portrait of East Berlin, the hipsters lost behind the wall remembering what used to be, represented by his gorgeous, half-caught jazz saxophone.

No matter how much comes to light, *Low* remains more than the sum of its parts. It leads to *"Heroes"*, yet it stands apart. As "Subterraneans" fades to orange, the only place you want to go is looping back to the fade-in of "Speed Of Life". That's *Low*: 38 minutes that last forever. ●



HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 2 US 11
PRODUCED BY: DAVID BOWIE; TONY VISCONTI
RECORDED AT: CHÂTEAU D'HÉROUVILLE; HANSA, WEST BERLIN

1

TELEVISION
MARQUEE MOON
ELEKTRA, 1977

Where 1960s R&B goes into hyperspace. Television invite us to enter the glass elevator of an ecstatic, poetic New York. *By Stephen Troussé*

BY the end of 1975, Television are in danger of being left behind. *Horses* bolts out of the stables in November and by December Patti Smith is being compared to Dylan, Keith Richards and Antonin Artaud in the pages of the *New York Times* magazine. Seymour Stein has signed the Ramones, who are preparing their debut album for Sire. Talking Heads only showed up at CBGB's in June and they're already recording demos for CBS. Meanwhile, Charles Shaar Murray, dispatched to New York by the *NME* to divine the sound of '75, dismisses Television as flaky, washed-up failures and not a patch on Tuff Darts...

But Tom Verlaine is biding his time, patiently charting a course from the corner of Bleecker and Bowery to the Eternal. How does he get there? Practically speaking, one way is via the long schlep up Broadway to the A&R studio on West 78th St, where Television show up, having finally got a deal via Danny Fields with Elektra in November 1976. At this point the room is shabby and down at heel, a faded glory since Phil Ramone moved operations round the corner to the old Columbia studio on 7th Ave. But it's here that he first recorded John Coltrane, Ray Charles and Stan Getz, who first blew the 10-year-old Tom Miller's tiny mind. All these years later, Verlaine senses there's still an atmosphere, a lingering portal, a way out of the midday of midtown Manhattan.

Alternatively ask any New Yorker how you get anywhere in this city and you get an old answer: PRACTICE. By the time Television finally rock up to the studio, they've played, we estimate, approaching 150 gigs in two years, sometimes two or three sets in an evening. Of course, they still beat Suicide, working on their own geological deeptime, to a debut album, but for a supposed punk band they have definitively paid their dues.

Since Richard Hell left, taking his rudimentary Danelectro bass, Television have been built on a solid foundation. Fred Smith, newly arrived from Blondie, brings a low-end pulse grounding even Billy Ficca's wilder flurries. And ever since he unilaterally made the quixotic choice of "Little Johnny Jewel" to be the band's calling card in the autumn of 1975 – prompting Richard Lloyd to storm out, before returning, chastened, a couple of weeks later – Verlaine has steadily asserted his control over the group, even if he ultimately fails to negotiate the Elektra deal as solo artist plus backing band.

Legendary Liverpool manager Bill Shankly once described a football team as eight blokes who carry the piano and three who can actually play the damn thing. It seems that Verlaine takes a similar view of his band, ruthlessly weeding out any challenge to his authority. Honed to a razor-sharp precision following weeks of rehearsal before they even enter the studio, Television are by now quite possibly the tightest rock band on the planet. The young Vic Godard, blown away after buying "Little Johnny Jewel" at Sex, describes ➢

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: UK 28 US –
PRODUCED BY: ANDY JOHNS, TOM VERLAINE
RECORDED AT: A&R RECORDING, NYC

SEE NO EVIL
VENUS
FRICTION
MARQUEE MOON
ELEVATION
GUIDING LIGHT
PROVE IT
TORN CURTAIN
TOM VERLAINE Lead vocals, guitar
RICHARD LLOYD Guitar, vocals
FRED SMITH Bass, vocals
BILLY FICCA Drums
PRODUCED BY ANDY JOHNS AND TOM VERLAINE
RECORDED AT A & R STUDIOS, NEW YORK CITY
ENGINEERED BY ANDY JOHNS, ASSISTED BY JIM BOYER
MIXED AT ATLANTIC STUDIOS BY ANDY JOHNS
ASSISTED BY RANDY MASON AND JIMMY DOUGLASS
ART DIRECTION: TONY LANE
BACK COVER ART: BILLY LOBO
PHOTOGRAPHY: ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE
MASTERED BY GREG CALBI
ANDREE HULKO - STERLING SOUND INC
ALL SONGS PUBLISHED BY DOUBLE EXPOSURE MUSIC LTD.
THIS ALBUM IS DEDICATED TO WILLIAM TERRY ORR
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Los Angeles, California 90069
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them as "a modern jazz quartet", but in truth they're closer to a string quartet or a Bach fugue. The sketches and improvisation were worked out in the laboratory of CBGB and the eight tracks that will become *Marquee Moon* are now scored, notated, choreographed and orchestrated, an infernal, well-tuned machine in the brain of Tom Verlaine.

The last thing he needs is a producer getting in the way, so the recruitment of Andy Johns proves a masterstroke. The same age as Verlaine, Johns is already a classic rock veteran, working with the Stones through their early-'70s imperial phase, and minting John Bonham's drum sound on "When The Levee Breaks". He's lived through the Stones at Nellcôte and Led Zep at Headley Grange, but even he isn't prepared for New York in 1976. When his early attempts to mic up Billy Ficca's kit to Bonzo dimensions are nixed by a horrified Verlaine he sensibly retires to the engineer's chair with a case of wine and lets him get on with things.

But crucially, Johns' mere presence alone grounds Television in the classic rock tradition, provides a link to the founding mid-'60s miracle of Clapton, Page and Beck. The very title of the album is a compact manifesto. If the Marquee was the swinging London crucible where the the earth elements of the Blues – the blood, sweat and damnation of slavery, the sex and violence in which the early bluesmen found fleeting deliverance – were transformed into Rock, then Television are a photographic negative. They're the nocturnal version – chilly, lunar, all those raw earth metals sublimated into cool mercury.

In 1975 when the band were still vainly hawking around their demos, they were invited to audition for Atlantic Records. After hearing a couple of songs, a shaken Ahmet Ertegun turned to Jerry Wexler and said, "Jerry, I can't sign this band. This is not earth music." For all his interstellar adventures, Jimi Hendrix was inextricably plugged into that earth music, The Doors were a very chthonic pagan rite, and even The Velvet Underground were rooted in the trash and squalid street hassles of the city. Television were the first rock band that cut the binds of gravity, sailed off towards the moon.

You can still hear remnants of the beat group – you can imagine the tightly wound garage band that opens the album with "See No Evil" supporting The Yardbirds in the anomic London of Antonioni's *Blow-Up* – though by the time they get to the cascading, scintillant "Venus" they might be a better fit playing in some modernist Roman dreamscape in *L'Eclisse*.

The title track is an encapsulation of the journey. With its lightning, railroad tracks and graveyard Cadillacs it could be an imagistic scene from some godforsaken Robert Johnson blues, the deliberate bass and flickering, stuttering riffs like a jilted lover trying to get his motor started. But the ascension, as Verlaine's and Lloyd's guitar lines entwine and ignite around the seven-minute mark is like speeding up the Empire State Building in a glass elevator, the city lights suddenly sliding like the Millennium Falcon going into hyperspace. By 8:42, we're shooting through the 102nd-floor observation deck in a hail of glass, speeding out into the starry Manhattan night.

It's tempting to see *Marquee Moon* as Verlaine's *Citizen Kane* – a magnificent debut so immaculately conceived it became impossible to follow. If so, it's crucial to acknowledge that just as Welles wasn't the sole auteur of *Kane* – it was born out of the strange, sublime conjunction of Herman J Mankiewicz's script, Gregg Toland's lighting and lens, Bernard Herrmann's score, not to mention the whole Mercury cast – then this is the record of a sublime band, not just players hitting marks and following direction. ●

"The first time anywhere!"

What does punk rock mean when you leave London? *Melody Maker* travels to Glasgow to witness New Yorkers Blondie and Television make their British debut, and find out. ALLAN JONES investigates the truth of glue-sniffing, and has his mind blown by TELEVISION.

MELODY MAKER 28.05.77

LONDON, as The Clash recently declared, may well be burning with boredom (nah, nah, nah, nah), but Glasgow – as someone involved in that city's emerging new wave movement so eloquently put it – has been for years an inferno of adolescent anger, frustration and hopeless violence.

Faced with no positive future, an interminable period of unemployment, and the dreary entertainment in Glasgow, its youth turns to drink, dope (there's some poisonous acid currently circulating and its victims are to be clearly seen on the streets, I assure you), vandalism, petty crime and casual aggression.

If, as some of its advocates have argued, the new wave in rock is to be seen primarily as a rebellious musical expression of disgust and hatred of the present oppressive establishment (both in music and politics), then it could have no more pertinent an environment in which to find an audience and foster further – perhaps even more extreme – antagonism.

Tim Niblock describes Glasgow as Desolation Boulevard. He's 17 years old and looks like Paul Simonon of The Clash. He left school last Friday; this week he signs on at the local Social Security office in Newton Mearns.

There is little prospect of employment, he says, though he hopes to gain the necessary qualifications to be admitted to art school. He's bright, articulate and full of tired hatred for Glasgow and its reactionary council.

The emergence of the new wave bands, he says, has given him some optimism: it's the first music he's heard that accurately reflects his predicament and frustrations, and it's encouraged him to attempt to change it for the better.

Incongruously, he sports a Grateful Dead tee-shirt (they're still one of his favourite bands) while enjoying the pseudonym, among his friends, of Scat Rabies – or alternatively, Terry Singer ("the same principle as Joe Strummer", he mentions).

He's in the city centre this Saturday afternoon with a friend, who asks to be identified as Allan Thunder, making the rounds of the hipper records shops like Listen, Bloggs and Graffiti.

He's also been trying, with success, we eventually learn, to score a ticket for the Ramones, who are this evening appearing with Talking Heads at Strathclyde University.

He and Thunder had discovered that the Ramones were staying at the Ivanhoe hotel; they went there and met the group's tour manager, Mike Stuart.

They explained that the university were admitting only students ("Only f— students," Thunder had sneered, "don't even understand what's happening with the new wave. We're fans and we cannae get in"). He gave them complimentary passes and put their names on the Ramones' personal guest list. Tim was ecstatic.

He didn't even falter the thought that after the gig he would probably have to walk the seven miles home to Newton Mearns. I mean, he's dedicated. Only last week he'd lashed out 10 quid to travel to see the Clash package ("magic band") in Edinburgh. The fact that he'd slept rough that night was more than compensated for by actually meeting Joe Strummer.

The Clash, like the Sex Pistols before them, had been refused access to a theatre in Glasgow, he says with venom in his blue eyes. The Pistols' Anarchy In The UK tour, he believes, was sabotaged by the city's Lord Provost and his henchmen, who revoked the licence of the Apollo on the night the Pistols were scheduled to play, effectively nishing the gig.

The attitude of the local authorities and media toward new wave music or punk attitudes in any manifestation is, he says, entirely repressive. Nevertheless, independent fanzines are beginning to flourish.

Trash '77, edited by Craig (no surname, it seems), is the most successful, and a new magazine, edited by someone called Peter, called *Crash Bang* (to which Tim Niblock will contribute), is out this week.

There are only a clutch of new wave bands at the moment in Glasgow, he explains, but more are forming. Those that currently exist, however, are facing fierce opposition from the landlords of those pubs that present live music.

The Jolt, for instance – a trio whose original numbers include items like "Responsibilities", "Mistakes In The Plan" and "Decoyed" – have been banned from several pubs because of the violent scenes their appearances have caused.

It's not punks who are causing the damage, argue Niblock and Pete. There is, apparently, a marauding gang of – as Peter had it – "fucking Lynyrd Skynyrd fans" who invariably turn up to disrupt the gigs.

They succeeded in trashing a bar called the Saints & Sinners, and as a result the new wave bands were barred. Indeed, these bands face resistance not only from the local authorities but by the city's hippy contingent.

"They're bullshit," Thunder comments. "Still into the Eagles and dope and getting stoned. It's pathetic." This observation proves to be true. In a bar called the Blenheim – "a hippy stronghold.➢

HOWARD BARLOW/REDFERNS

Heading straight for uncharted territory: Tom Verlaine with Television at Manchester's Free Trade Hall, May 26, 1977

THE INNER SLEEVE ...INSIDE THE ALBUM

Try to look spaced out and we should be all right," Thunder warns – Niblock and I are accosted by a wired cat who complains of our short hair in a somewhat bellicose manner.

It becomes obvious in Glasgow that they take their controversies seriously. Thunder mentioned newspaper editorials attacking punks, and headlines of the likes of "Johnny Rotten Eats Old Ladies".

This seems rather fanciful, but last week's *The Sunday Post* – one of Glasgow's most popular papers – had a lead story headlined: "Four-Year Old Glue Sniffer".

The story was an account of a young Glasgow mother discovering her four-year-old son sniffing glue: "The boy has set a tragic record of being the youngest-ever glue-sniffer," the *Post* continued.

Glue sniffing, according to the *Post*, is rampant in the East End of Glasgow and parts of Lanarkshire. Teachers have discovered groups of up to 20 children huddled together taking tokes off tubes of glue in school playgrounds.

Duke Street Hospital in Glasgow has opened a special unit to deal with cases like the aforementioned (a recent patient there was so desperate for a snort that he climbed out of a window and bought glue from a nearby shop. He was subsequently found sniffing away in the hospital grounds).

"Glue sniffing has caused a dozen deaths in Scotland in recent years," the *Post* concluded. "It can lead to brain damage and attacks the lung, liver and kidneys. Parents should watch out for the symptoms – glue on clothing, a strange chemical smell, lack of energy."

Niblock admits that there is a great deal of glue sniffing in the city; he refuses to blame the popularity of the practice on the emergence of the new wave.

"For years, people have done anything to get out of it. They'll take anything to escape from this place."

I wondered if he thought bands as politically committed as The Clash would provoke a confrontation with the Establishment and encourage the city's teenagers to actively subvert and resist the repression; were they preparing the way toward an alternative lifestyle and attitude that would endure beyond the excitement of the moment?

"I dunno," he mused. "The Clash and the Pistols are fighting the system from the inside... They're trying to do something now, but they'll sell out in the end. They all do eventually.

"It wouldnae surprise me to see The Clash on *Stars On Sunday* in a couple of years' time. But they'll be replaced by some new band. They'll keep coming through."

SUNDAY evening at the Apollo; to complete a weekend of new wave music in Glasgow we've come to see the British debut of Television and Blondie.

At 7.30, the Apollo is uncharacteristically cheerless. The theatre is less than half full (or more than half empty, if you prefer), and reminds me of a Tuesday matinee at the Lewisham Odeon – the day they allow in the local OAPs at a substantial discount.

Those members of the audience present consist principally of survivors of the previous night's bash at Strathclyde – Pete from *Crash Bang* is there, and so are various members of Johnnie & The Self Abusers – and assorted lunatics with pins instead of medals on their coats (to quote a line from Arthur Lee's "You Set The Scene").

There is, among the Dave Vanian sleek-back-and-sides surrogates, one particularly individual individual; he's wearing a Klan hood, over which is a pair of shades. I bet John Cale wishes he'd thought of that one.

Anyway, the next thing you know the house lights are down, and Blondie are on stage and striding through "Kung Fu Girls", an entertainment from their debut album on Private Stock.

Deborah Harry launches into her celebrated impersonation of a transexual Bruce Lee, striking various dramatic martial arts poses. I notice that her head seems too big for her body (I should talk after what Lou Reed told me!).

The band sweep, with all the instrumental force of The Surfaris, into "In The Sun". The bass player, who looks like the old Winkies guitarist Phil Rambow impersonating Wilko, bobbydazzles his way across the stage, creating an alternative visual focal point.

I'd got a little tired by this time of Debbie's antics, and since there wasn't much else going down in the visual department (guitarist Chris Stein was as morose as he was immobile during these opening numbers, pianist James Destri was just pissing about looking bored, and drummer Clement Burke merely contented himself with gobbing at Debbie's back), so – to end a long sentence in which I've proved that I know the names of the band members at least – it was left to Gary Valentine (for it was he) and his spastic dancing to keep us enthralled.

Musically, Blondie soon became tiresome. That piddling Farfisa employed by Destri (I wish he'd ridden again – right out of the damned theatre)

Blondie in London, 1977: (l–r) Clem Burke, Jimmy Destri, Debbie Harry and Chris Stein

IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS

Fierce and positive: Television at the Hammersmith Odeon, London, May, 1977

began to scratch at my nerve ends. And Debbie Harry sings as flat as anyone I've ever heard.

Stein – someone I wouldn't like to trolley across in a dark alley – was the most accomplished musician on stage, but his repetitive runs – often unison trills with Destri – soon lost their appeal, too.

They performed "Man Overboard" from the album, a few new songs, including "I'm Always Touched By Your Presence", the mildly amusing "I Didn't Have The Nerve To Say No", "Bermuda Triangle" and "Detroit".

They were about to step into "X Offender" when there occurred the most entertaining moment of their performance. "WAITAMINUTE!" Debbie shrieked, just as the band clambered aboard the opening instrumental sequence.

They all stopped. Stein (who'd switched to bass) plonked himself down on the front of the stage. Destri leaned against the wings. Valentine looked confused.

"AWWW F—" exploded Deborah in a manner that would, I'm sure, have shocked her dear mother.

Hasty consultations took place between the principals, and I was hoping they would have a godalmighty row right before our eyes. No such luck. They reconciled whatever problem or argument it was and started again. As they left the stage the moody Stein flung the bass against the drumkit. He looked as if he hadn't enjoyed himself at all.

Blondie, I concluded, should have exchanged places with Talking Heads. They have far more in common with the cartoon burlesque of the Ramones than that latter band, who as we were about to discover, would have made an excellent and sympathetic support for the extraordinary Television.

"For the first time anywhere in Britain," announced deejay Andy Dunkley at approximately 9.30 pm on Sunday, "please welcome TELEVISION!"

The 75 minutes of music that followed that introduction were, believe me, among the most extraordinary I've heard from any band on any stage in years: *Marquee Moon*, Television's debut album, had suggested a band of rare vision, enterprise and imagination, but I was unprepared for the power with which Tom Verlaine's unique compositions would be translated in concert.

From the dynamic opening chords of "See No Evil," I was convinced of Television's potential greatness. Tom Verlaine stood stage-centre with his perspex guitar, flanked by the impressive Richard Lloyd, his co-lead player, and the stocky bassist, Fred Smith. Verlaine and Lloyd exchanged scintillating guitar lines

I was feeling shell-shocked on the sheer rush of the music

that cut across the relentless rhythmic jolts at bizarre tangents.

The classic "Venus" followed, with its beautifully orchestrated guitar themes and haunting lyrics. Midway through, Verlaine broke from the pack and produced a solo of exhilarating clarity and invention.

I almost froze at its cool, detached beauty. It was challenged subsequently by a particularly vehement Lloyd solo during "Elevation," a powerfully aggressive reading this, with that characteristically eccentric orchestration of interweaving guitars that distinguishes so much of their album.

"Foxhole", a great new number, followed, its brittle instrumental histrionics focused principally on an intricate Lloyd riff over which Verlaine played another enthralling solo.

By this time I was feeling shell-shocked on the sheer rush of the music. Then we were into the mysterious landscape of "Little Johnny Jewel", an early Verlaine composition, the lyrics of which he recited over a weird, spidery guitar solo.

Another new song, "Adventure", was introduced. A pulverising rhythm, the guitarists exchanging solos of brutal power and energy.

Could there be no end to their ingenuity, I wondered.

There was no end, I assure you. A slow, creeping Verlaine solo meandered toward the main theme of a song that sounded vaguely familiar. Good Christ, I thought, they're heading straight for "Knockin' On Heaven's Door."

They were, too. And it was magnificent. A version that left me breathless. Lloyd took another solo here that positively burned with anguish, and then they were straight into "Friction" and out the other side, with Verlaine and Lloyd firing broadsides from the hip.

"It goes like this and it's called 'Marquee Moon'," drawled Verlaine, blasting off a glorious guitar crescendo in harmony with Lloyd as they exploded into the title track of their album.

The musical voyage that followed virtually defies description, From the niggling riff that introduces the song, Verlaine headed straight for uncharted territory with a solo that switchbacked from intimate lyricism to raw aggression. It was beautifully structured, light years ahead of the search-and-destroy missions of most new wave bands.

The song built to a pitch of screaming intensity, with Verlaine standing transfixed, his eyes clamped shut like a victim of his own musical visions, hit from all sides by spotlights, as he led the band into an extraordinary one-note coda.

They returned for an encore and played "Satisfaction", and it was a groove.

Television are unique. No arguments. They're beautiful and they're powerful. I'm almost frightened of going to see them again, their music on Sunday was so fierce and positive and rooted in defiant optimism.

I'll tell you. After their set I fell sideways laughing onto the streets of Glasgow. And I shouldn't be surprised if there weren't flames on the horizon.

YOU know, as the London new wave scene is sucked up increasingly by the commercial imperatives of the major record companies, and its audience – as exemplified by the turnout at the recent Clash concert at the Rainbow – becomes a cheap, grotesque fashion parade of geeks and freaks, maybe we should look toward cities like Glasgow, where the violence and aggression is without the glamour of the media spotlight, for music that is a truly renegade alternative.

Craig, the editor of *Trash '77* (and the person who made the point about Glasgow burning), put it most forcefully in an editorial devoted to London's former punk haven, the Roxy: "Yes, they (the London kids) have the Roxy, but big deal, they're welcome to the dump. It's really a sickening place. Someone should drop a bomb on it as far as I'm concerned." ●

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

SELLING RARE BANDS BY THE POUND

The 20 most collectable albums of the 1970s, *by Mark Bentley*

THERE are over 11.1 million different releases detailed on record collector site discogs.com, covering every conceivable format, genre and timeframe. The site's data-driven list of the Top 20 most wanted items from those millions of options includes some familiar releases. High in those charts are the original issues of *Ziggy...*, the UK and US versions of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, Herbie Hancock's *Head Hunters*, Neil Young's *Harvest* and Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*.

This is a big clue about the supply/demand metric for releases from the period 1970–74. Despite the ubiquity of multifarious reissues, remasters, repackages and special editions, the hardcore record collector still desires the original, first-pressed version. And he/she will pay very good money indeed for the right items, even if they sold well and aren't necessarily 'rare' in the we-once-shifted-12-copies-at-a-gig-in-Chesterfield sense.

Some caveats. First, condition, both of disc, and sleeve. Even small pops and clicks will dramatically reduce a record's worth, and any tears, rips, sun bleaching, light-ale stains or fag burns to the cover likewise. Increasingly – and this is a trend across record collecting – the difference between the value of a "much-loved" copy and one that's been stored in clinical clean-room conditions can be staggering, as you'll see below.

As a general rule, later '70s releases by artists big and small are easy to find, and priced accordingly. Anyone who has flipped through a record fair bargain bucket will have noticed many dog-eared LPs from the period, with Elvis Costello, Blondie, Elton, ELO et al looking alarmingly cheap. The top prices for these artists are always with the promos, oddities, test pressings. The Eagles' *Hotel California*, in decent condition, should really not cost you more than a few pints. But a signed, in-house Asylum test pressing from autumn '76 will set you back $2,500. Still, as you'll see below, we've found a fair few remarkable records to blow your savings on.

VASHTI BUNYAN
JUST ANOTHER DIAMOND DAY PHILIPS, 1970

WHAT: Wispy, ethereal, forward-thinking folk.

WHY: Like Nick Drake, an artist who needed to be discovered by successive generations. Much reissued, but punters pay big for the first pressings.

HOW MUCH: Typically £1,500, but copies have made close to £4,000.

ROLLING STONES
STICKY FINGERS ROLLING STONES, 1971

WHAT: Cocksure blues from the Stones' regal period.

WHY: The iconic Warhol-designed sleeve – complete with working fly zipper – is a work of art. Shame it was so prone to rips and tears.

HOW MUCH: Even skanky copies make £30 these days; Very Good (VG) versions listed at £200 or more.

T.REX
ELECTRIC WARRIOR FLY, 1971

WHAT: We're pretty sure you know this one.

WHY: A big-selling, freely available album. Included as a textbook example of the impact of condition on desirability and price.

HOW MUCH: Immaculate/mint UK first pressings start in the hundreds and go up. A factory-sealed US issue on Reprise made $1,100 in 2019.

THE WAILERS
CATCH A FIRE ISLAND, 1973

WHAT: A landmark long-playing release in reggae music.

WHY: Marley and co's indelible Island debut is one of those pan-genre must haves. Gloriously (and delicately) packaged in a Zippo-lighter-style, top-opening sleeve.

HOW MUCH: Even poor-condition versions have made £40. For mint? We reckon £250 now.

TUDOR LODGE
TUDOR LODGE VERTIGO, 1971

WHAT: Delicate, affecting chamber folk.

WHY: A genuine lost classic – atmospheric, expertly played and produced. Oh, and it's on the usually metal-friendly Vertigo label, which adds to its charm and its price tag.

HOW MUCH: £500 for a VG version; quadruple it for mint.

LED ZEPPELIN
IV ATLANTIC DELUXE, 1971

WHAT: Er, *Stairway...*?

WHY: Original UK red/maroon pressings came with a credit for Peter Grant on the label and the catalogue number separated by a space: 2401[space]002. Similar arcana affects pricings on releases around the world.

HOW MUCH: For a mint first-week UK press, you're talking £1,000-plus.

COMUS
FIRST UTTERANCE DAWN, 1971

WHAT: Terrifying ritual psych folk. Possibly the most disturbing seven songs ever committed to vinyl.

WHY: On the freak-friendly Dawn label, this genuinely shocking, hugely adventurous album has given many collectors a dose of must-haveititis down the years.

HOW MUCH: Around £400 for a UK orig. In mint, it's pushing a grand.

BLACK SABBATH
MASTER OF REALITY VERTIGO, 1971

WHAT: Sabs' stoner-rock salvo, a gold-selling UK Top 5

WHY: It's all about the packaging. Originals came in an embossed, easily squashable box, with poster. These have aged far worse than Ozzy.

HOW MUCH: Museum-standard, as-new copies are valued at £400-plus.

MELLOW CANDLE
SWADDLING SONGS
DERAM, 1972

WHAT: Pastoral, Fairport-ish folk pop from the Irish underground.
WHY: Pleasant rather than primal, this slice of faerie folk has some faint pagan undertones. It's one of those records which, almost inexplicably, the hardcore go bonkers for.
HOW MUCH: £1,000-plus.

DAVID BOWIE
THE MAN WHO SOLD THE WORLD MERCURY, 1971

WHAT: The original, infamous, poor-selling "dress cover" issue, on Mercury's black/silver labels.
WHY: One of the Dame's marquee collectables. Like all first-press Bowie from the period, it's piling on the pounds.
HOW MUCH: £1,500 or so for VG. Mint will break £2,000.

PINK FLOYD
THE WALL HARVEST, 1979

WHAT: Waters and company's epically packaged opus
WHY: A key theme in collecting is the desire to score an as-new first pressing of rock's canonical classics. Once a record fair staple. Now, proving pricier...
HOW MUCH: £40+ for spanking UK originals. The awesome Italian orange vinyl promo? £2,000.

DAVID BOWIE
STATION TO STATION
RCA, 1976

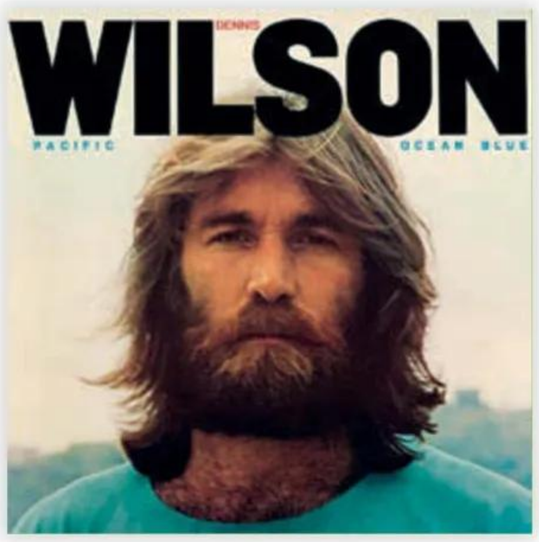
WHAT: Bowie's cocaine odyssey – in full-colour proof sleeve.
WHY: The value of all Bowie's '70s output seems to be rising daily. This is the apogee – an unspeakably rare full-colour version that turns up once a decade or so.
HOW MUCH: A copy sold for $2,425 in 2005. Today? Maybe double it.

JOY DIVISION
UNKNOWN PLEASURES
FACTORY, 1979

WHAT: The album as a work of art – textured cover, bevelled-corner inner sleeve, and an almost imperceptible reddish sheen on the wax.
WHY: Rare, precious and easily damaged – so mint versions are much prized.
HOW MUCH: Is £500 too much?

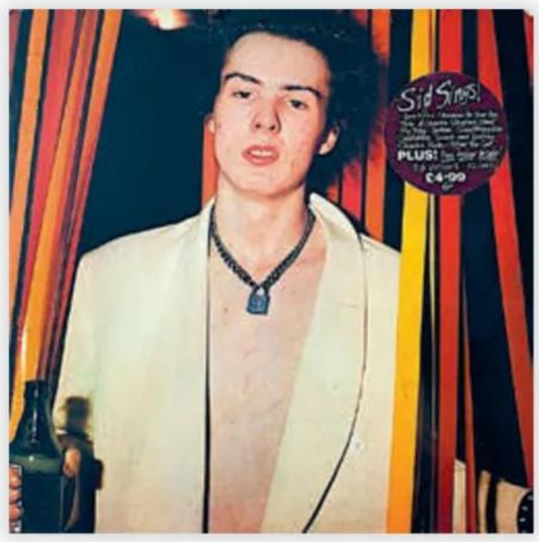
ELTON JOHN
CAPTAIN FANTASTIC...
DJM, 1975

WHAT: Brown-vinyl version of the peak-period Elton classic.
WHY: Exclusive issue for record execs, with a hand-signed note from Elt and Bernie Taupin: "This limited edition pressing is one of 2000 personally autographed to thank you for your support"
HOW MUCH: £1,000+, at least.



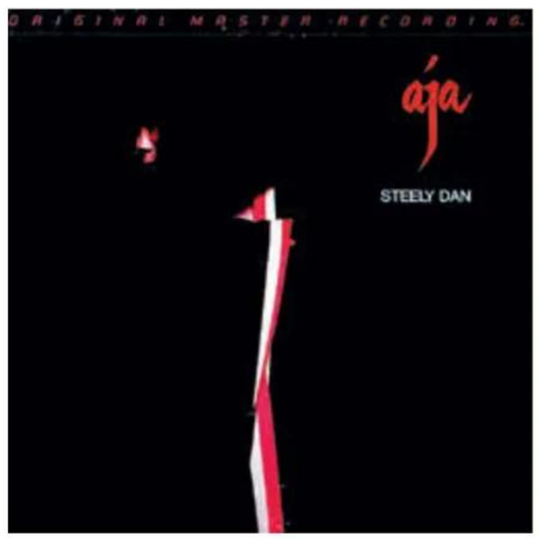
DENNIS WILSON
PACIFIC OCEAN BLUE
CARIBOU, 1977

WHAT: Keening, charismatic rock-pop from the lost Beach Boy
WHY: Sold in dribbles on first release; out of print for decades. Has justifiably built a must-have reputation through the years.
HOW MUCH: A lavish reissue dented prices. But a first UK press is still a £60+ item if you ever see one.



SID VICIOUS
SID SINGS VIRGIN, 1979

WHAT: Hastily issued post-Pistols cash-in.
WHY: Very first pressings came with two different posters – Sid holding a drink, and Sid holding a knife. As one dealer told us, "Those posters are far more valuable than the record, which is shit."
HOW MUCH: £100+ if you're lucky.

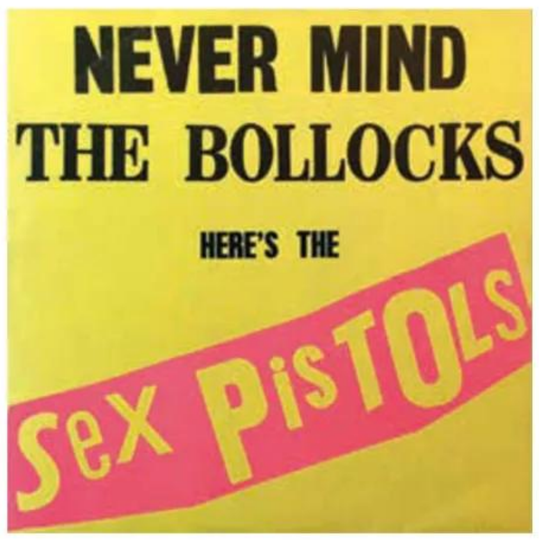


STEELY DAN
AJA MCA, 1978

WHAT: Simply one of the best-sounding pop records ever. But has sir heard it in the half-speed mastered, limited edition JVC Supervinyl version?
WHY: Audio nuts want this album in ultra-mint condition, and will pay big money for the Mobile Fidelity Sound Labs issue.
HOW MUCH: $400 if still sealed.

THE WALKER BROTHERS
NITE FLIGHTS
GTO, 1978

WHAT: Erstwhile easy-pop crooners go Bowie, with buzzsaw, electro-rock soundscapes.
WHY: Amazing, unexpected, and altogether alarming for the fanbase, it totally bombed on release.
HOW MUCH: Trending at £80.



SEX PISTOLS
NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS... VIRGIN, 1977

WHAT: Cat no: V2086/SPOTS 001. The earliest, ultra-rare version: no track-listing on the back, but packaged with a poster and a freebie single, "Submission".
WHY: Because it's basically impossible to find, and every punk fan alive wants one.
HOW MUCH: £2,000-ish.

LED ZEPPELIN
IN THROUGH THE OUT DOOR SWAN SONG, 1979

WHAT: This comes with a gimmick – six sleeve variants, and because of the bag on the outside, you don't actually know which one you're getting.
WHY: It's a project! The inner sleeve had a paint-by-numbers element.
HOW MUCH: A job lot of all six variants sold for about £350. ●

NEW WORLD RECORDS

A new decade brings a new pathology of the long-player. If a gallery artist isn't designing the die-cut gatefold of your quadraphonic album, you're nowhere.

By Mark Beaumont and John Robinson

R.I.P. LAMINATED SLEEVES

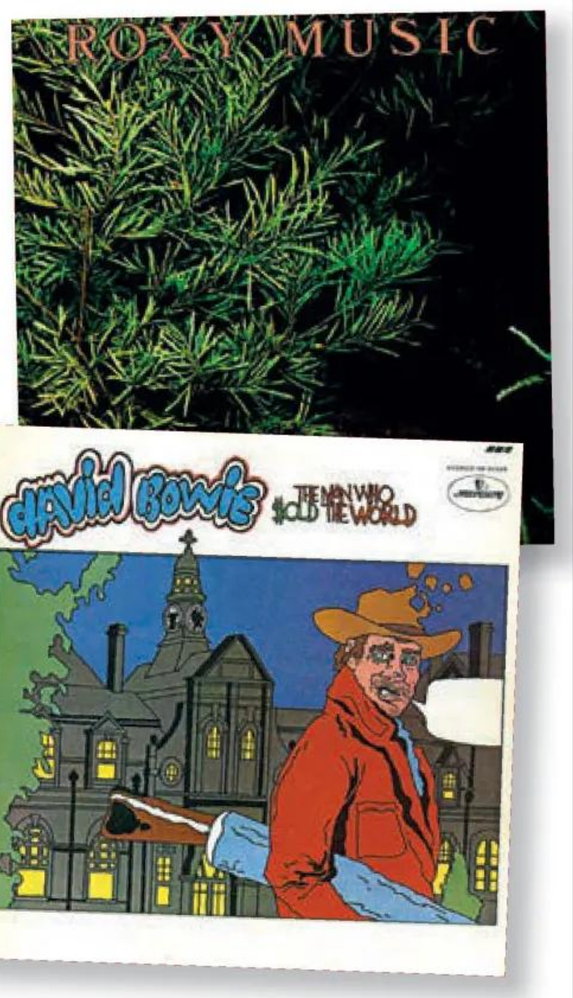
Like two-minute songs and an air of optimism, laminated sleeves were commonplace in the '60s but increasingly rare by the mid-'70s. Roxy Music, Sparks and Bowie (try hunting down the ultra-rare first-edition laminated *Hunky Dory* for less than the price of a laptop) were among the few giving their records a luxuriant coating of pure class.

PRINTED INNER

Not all singers enunciated as nicely as that Dave Gilmour – did no-one tell Bryan Ferry it was rude to sing with your mouth full of springs? So listeners welcomed the shift from inner sleeves carrying advertising to those printed with lyrics. If only to be sure that, yes, Mickey Mouse really grew up a cow. Who knew?

GATEFOLD

Double the album meant double the art space too, as albums began to open onto panoramic alien vistas and inadvisable tourist practices at the Giant's Causeway.

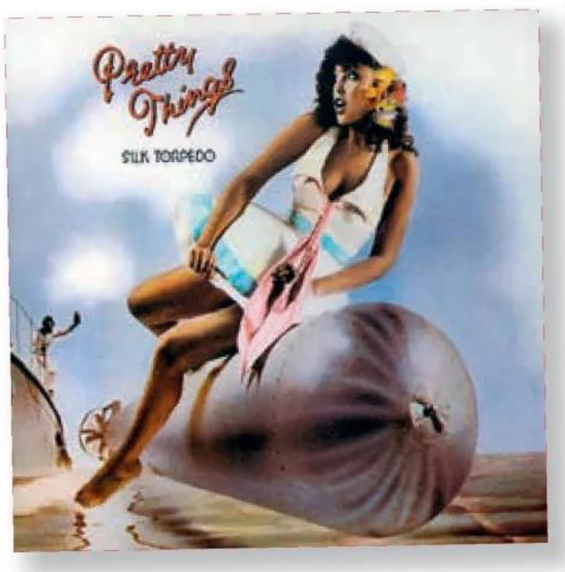


DIFFERENT US SLEEVES

Pre-warned by the costly US furore over the Beatles-as-child-butchers cover of *Yesterday And Today* in 1966, labels favoured the inoffensive when coveting shelf-space in Wal-Mart. Roxy's *Country Life* (nudity), Bowie's *The Man Who Sold The World* (man in a dress) and Mott The Hoople's *Mott* (*um*, classical Roman references?) were among the sleeves that fell foul.

INSTRUCTIONS

"To be played at maximum volume", read the sleeve of *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars*. "Nobody played synthesisers", insisted Queen LPs. "Play in a different room", *Metal Machine Music* should probably have said.



SEXIST COVERS

What's wrong with being sexy? Just smell the gloves of The Pretty Things' *Silk Torpedo* or anything by Roxy Music...

THIN VINYL

The 1973 oil crisis, during which barrels of oil rocketed in price, had the knock-on effect of forcing UK and US manufacturers to produce thinner, lower-quality vinyl records. Long story short, seek out Canadian imports from '73/'74 if you don't want your music to come with unintended wobble-board.

RCA'S DYNAFLEX

Not a product of the oil crisis (it was introduced in 1969), the "Dynaflex" was a thin, virgin-vinyl record

not bulked out with "reground" records. Some Dynaflex records were so thin and flexible they could be bent almost in half.

QUAD SOUND

For those listeners who happened to live in Abbey Road or ran speaker shops, quadraphonic sound was a revelation; four speakers in each corner of a room relaying separate channels of a surround-sound experience. *The Dark Side Of The Moon* was mixed specifically for quad sound – but the format failed since you needed a Jodrell Bank of decoders and amplifiers to make it work and most of the encoded quad grooves would disintegrate after half-a-dozen listens.

TRIPLE ALBUMS

Our double album is finished, but where to put all these leftover jams, solos and quasi-conceptual meanders? We're gonna need a bigger record! Inspired by the

success of *All Things Must Pass*, the likes of Yes, ELP and the Grateful Dead spotted an opportunity to capture their entire live experience on record, including the awful bits. Enter the superfluous third disc, still in pristine condition today.

BIG GRAPHIC CONCEPT

Sparked by *Sgt Pepper...* and Warhol's banana, and encapsulated by *Dark Side...*'s prism, the album sleeve as conceptual art piece came into its own in the early '70s, as Hipgnosis partnered with Floyd and Roger Dean envisioned Yes's alien landscapes. (See also: Big Design Name; Added Value; Illustrations).

BIG DESIGN NAME

After Peter Blake (Beatles) and Warhol (Velvets, Stones) made the album sleeve a respectable high-art canvas, sci-fi nightmare visionary HR Giger (who turned down Jagger...) was roped in for ELP's *Brain Salad Surgery* , acclaimed photographer and filmmaker Robert Frank shot the Super 8 footage used for the *Exile On Main St* sleeve, and pop artist Guy Peellaert turned Bowie into a semi-alsatian for *Diamond Dogs*. (See also: Illustrations.)

ADDED VALUE

Another *Pepper...* innovation, and one that would separate the true collectors from the impulsive rucksack decorators for decades to come: the special-edition stickers, posters and cutouts that cascaded from the inner sleeve of the '70s like so much future-priceless tat.

LISTING EVERY SINGLE INSTRUMENT PLAYED

Oh, for the days of four-track, when it was just the tambourine being played by mystery hands. Now we had to know who was responsible for every noise on the record, be it theremin solo, apocalyptic synth vibe or distraught producer's child.

DIE-CUT SLEEVES

The '70s saw record companies becoming distinctly adventurous with their sleeve lacerations: the *Led Zep III* wheel, Traffic adorning *The Low Spark Of High Heeled Boys* and *Shoot Out...* with cubic die-cut covers and the Faces' "leering Gastone" gracing *Ooh La La*. (See also: Gimmicks).

ILLUSTRATIONS

No photograph could hope to capture the intergalactic miasma of noise being made by, say, Gentle Giant, so only by the magic of illustration could we really see the music. Hence Roger Dean's Yes-scapes, Alan Aldridge's *Butterfly Ball...* surrealism, and plenty more besides.

MODELS

Bowie had Twiggy, Roxy had Jerry Hall, Billy Paul had Grace Jones – the '70s gave a whole new meaning to "having a model on your sleeve".

GIMMICKS

Sticky Fingers came with a zippable

fly. Uriah Heep's *Look At Yourself* helpfully provided a mirrored cover. Alice Cooper's *School's Out* came with a pair of paper knickers and a sleeve that lifted like a school desk. And Family's *Bandstand* featured an antique telly showing footage of the band. If you can imagine it, the '70s probably did it.

WHITE SPACE

Never mind the tyranny of the blank page – on record sleeves, white space feels luxurious. Just think of Joni Mitchell smoking a fag in her beret on the front of *Hejira* or the rhythm section on the front of

Fleetwood Mac. Then you've got Bowie on the front of *Station To Station* – a sleeve actively redacted from colour into monochrome. Only the most gummy and newsprint-fingered listener will fail to appreciate the pristine look of it all.

GREATEST HITS

No new material? No problem! Though born in the 1960s, the greatest-hits collection came of age in '75–'79 and may be the era's greatest business legacy. For all the conceptual revolution of punk, here was its diametric opposite – a repackage of previously available material to bolster record company coffers and afford ageing band members time and money to work on their recreational substance use. Even Bowie did it – twice. Unwelcome context for punks/call to arms to wake the sleepers? The best-selling US album of the 20th century was 1975's *Their Greatest Hits* by the Eagles. You're welcome, take it easy.

BRIEF RETURN OF LAMINATION

Check a fruity late-period run of Bowie: laminated *"Heroes"* and super-shiny *Lodger*. By the 1980s this was gone like Major Tom.

SLEEVE VARIATIONS

Were punk labels really so different in policy from majors? Some of their tactics would suggest not. Perhaps *In Through The Out Door* wasn't Led Zeppelin's finest hour, but if you're a fan you may well buy it numerous times hoping to collect all six of the variant "Dear John" sleeves. On a similarly slightly different note, you might remark in the period on the variant sleeves of Elvis Costello's *This Year's Model*. Or indeed, this being Stiff, the variant wallpapers of Ian Dury's *Do It Yourself*. Or maybe it wasn't a plan but a "mistake".

MISTAKES

So at the same time there were "mistakes", there were actually genuinely proper mistakes made in the record industry, and we're not just talking "Dreadlock Holiday". Punk was responsible for some big ones: putting out an edition of *Never Mind The Bollocks* without "Submission" on it was definitely one, though the track did turn up as a bonus single (see below: Free Gifts) with early super-rare editions of the album. And having got a song as incredible as "Train In Vain", would you manage to leave it off the sleeve? We're talking to you, *London Calling*.

"MISTAKES"

Stiff Records brought their own sense of humour to the business of record promotion. The excellent Damned debut album *Damned Damned Damned* was alive with the possibilities of stickers (see

below, Stickers) but also with the "mistake": on the rear cover, rather than a picture of Rat, Dave, Brian and Cap there's a picture of Eddie & The Hot Rods and an "erratum" sticker. Not a million conceptual miles away, the rear cover of Hawkwind's 1979 album *PXR5* featured an illustration of an incorrectly wired plug. In later editions it was blacked out completely, but to begin with the offending installation was covered with a red sticker saying "DO NOT REMOVE THIS STICKER".

WE JUST LIKE THE UNIFORMS, HONEST

Some bright sparks – come on down, Skids, The Residents – used to think it was a good idea to draw heavily on the design ethos and iconography of the Nazi era to make a subversive point about... something or other. They were quickly persuaded that this wasn't quite as smart as they originally thought, and reissued their albums in different sleeves. Well that was a good use of their time.

COLOURED VINYL/ PICTURE DISCS

Whether selling soft rock or punk rock, record companies knew a good trick when they saw one. Coloured vinyl didn't make its way especially widely onto LPs (the audio was thought to be suspect) but it was a convenient shorthand for making an interesting offering to a band's fanbase (as no-one said in 1978). See: UK Subs' *Another Kind Of Blues* (RCA,1979), whose first 20,000 copies were on blue vinyl, or Wayne County & The Electric Chairs' *Storm The Gates Of Heaven* (Safari,1978) on marble-coloured vinyl. In softer waters, picture discs were big with the likes of Boston, Rod Stewart and Heart.

STICKERS

Yes, punk rock records had them (what with one thing and another *Damned Damned Damned* was basically all sticker) and both mistakes and "mistakes" warranted them. But they also could help alert the buyer to the amazing incentivising free gift inside (see below: Free Gifts) or help point you in the direction of the Serious Enigmatic Artist you are buying an album by – which possibly ruined their enigmaticness a little bit (see below: Enigmatic Artist Alert).

PRINT TRADE SECRETS

Embossed sleeves like *Love Bites* or *Presence*. Texture on *Unknown Pleasures*, or *Fear Of Music*. Die-cut sleeves (*Physical Graffiti*). Never mind a whole world of lyric sheets and inserts and booklets (Zep again: *The Song Remains The Same*). In this period literally whole forests tumble at a recording artist's whim.

ENIGMATIC ARTIST ALERT

A tough sell, an enigma. If you're Pink Floyd's *The Wall* and you just have a load of bricks on the front, then you'll invest in a fancy transparent sticker to tell people who you are. Much the same was true of Led Zeppelin and their *Presence* album, whose cover featured an enigmatic commissioned "object" to feature mysteriously on the cover. Having made the concession of putting the band's name on the front for a change (this time in near-invisible embossed text) (see above: White Space and Print Trade Secrets), they then had to back-pedal to putting a sticker on the front so you could... well, see it. Enigma very popular in hard rock: come on down, Aerosmith's information-free *Draw The Line* (1977) and Bad Company's *Burnin' Sky* from the same year.

REGGAE

Yes there was reggae on reggae records. But it was also so widespread – as employed by everyone from Patti Smith to Elvis Costello, Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones and The Police – that it warrants inclusion here as an identifier of the period. Maybe if we mention The Clash now you'll forgive the fact that we can't leave this topic, much as we might like to, without mentioning 10cc.

FREE GIFTS

The late '70s were great for gifts. Already accustomed to getting good giveaways on the front of your *NME*, an album now often delivered much the same. They covered all bases from the comparatively sensible posters (Sid Vicious), postcards (*Wish You Were Here*) and free 7"s (Stranglers, Wire) to the odder masks and press-on tattoos (Kiss), even the plain crazy (the cardboard spaceship that came with ELO's *Out Of The Blue*). Led Zeppelin's *In Through The Out Door* came with the opportunity of instantly devaluing the album for the secondary market: a "paint your own" inner sleeve that reacted to water.

OUTER BAGS

As the album begins to fetishise itself, outer bags make an appearance. *Another Music In A Different Kitchen* by the Buzzcocks came with a "Product" carrier bag; *Wish You Were Here*'s had a black shrinkwrap and a sticker with robot hands; *In Through The Out Door*, a brown "bootleg" paper bag behind which lurked its six different sleeves... ●

I WAS THERE!

"A holistic gift..." artist ROGER DEAN tells John Robinson about game-changing '70s sleeve art, a "sky ark" and sharing a flat with Syd Barrett

"I WAS working at Vertigo on stuff that was essentially jazz, but I wanted to do something more rock'n'roll. I went and saw David Howells at MCA and he was interested in me doing some stuff. The first was Osibisa. I was sent to watch them play and talk to the guys. For me it was very successful. I remember walking down Oxford Street and there was a whole window of Osibisa covers in a record shop. It blew me away.

"Peter Ledeboer was art director of *Oz* magazine and he had a poster company. He saw the Osibisa cover and he agreed to do posters, which were very successful, so I was beginning to have a bit of a profile. But I still wanted to do more rock'n'roll. I took my portfolio round and met Phil Carson, who was boss of Atlantic in Europe. He was really sweet, said, 'I love your work, but I only have two bands: Yes and Led Zeppelin.'

"He introduced me to Yes and my recollection is they had a title, 'Fragile', and their idea was a flight case, stickered. Obviously there was no need for me to be involved if that was going to be the case. But they liked my work, and I came back to them with an idea for a story and they liked it and said I could work on a metaphor – the world breaking up. The story was carried out over *Fragile*, *Yessongs* and *Close To The Edge*.

"It was in essence a creation myth. A child living on a tiny planet has a dream the planet will break up and gets his family and friends to build a space ark. As the planet breaks up, they shepherd the segments off to find a new home. Phil Carson was brilliant and went for it.

"I was mostly interested in Yes's ideas about where the music was coming from. How to put it? What planet was their music coming from, and how to make it feel at home. They were pretty good about letting me hold the reins visually.

"I was a teenager in Hong Kong. I loved it there – it was noisy, it was colourful and it was strange. I had a comic from England called *The Eagle*, which had a character in it called Dan Dare, Pilot Of The Future, and it was then I decided I was going to design the future.

I was interested in natural history: I'd painted and drawn animals and insects obsessively. I thought I was going to do something involving designing the future and painting animals – but there was no art college course for that. I often denied any obvious influence, but the Chinese landscape paintings I saw in Hong Kong I loved. I'd have to say *Dan Dare* was an influence philosophically.

"I was at art college with Storm [*Thorgerson, Hipgnosis co-founder*]. I didn't know him well, he was doing film. But he lived in the same building as me on the junction of Harrington Road and Brompton Road in a place called Egerton Court. We lived on the third floor and he was in the first floor – Syd Barrett from Pink Floyd lived, briefly, in our apartment. What was he like? What do you expect me to say? Strange; not very communicative.

> "Hipgnosis were very good, very disciplined, mad as a box of frogs"

"But Storm was a friend; they were making marbled wallpaper down there. They did *Saucerful Of Secrets* and got that marbling out of their system and they pretty much went for photography or subcontracting other illustrators. But I don't think I had much competition, so that gave me the good fortune to learn my skill in public without being swarmed by people much better than me. Hipgnosis were very good, very disciplined, mad as a box of frogs.

"What we were doing was making an integrated, holistic gift; the album cover with the music was a fantastic gift to receive and to give. The packaging was an integral part of the gift. It was a magical process. If an album came with a plastic toy, that plastic toy was treated as an important icon. If it was given away with a box of cornflakes, it would be thrown in the bin – it was all about the context. The zipper in the *Sticky Fingers* album cover didn't make the music play better – it made it play worse. But it was part of this gift culture.

"Jon Anderson [*Yes leader*] mostly let me get on. He always wanted something added, to put something in. He wanted birds in *Relayer*, and some kind of slipstream thing in too. I didn't mind him wanting to interact. But when I went out to Montreux when they were doing *Going For The One* [*1977*] I had what I thought was my most powerful Yes cover to date. It was *Floating Islands*, and I had that painting with me. But when I got to the studio, Jon was painting a picture and my recollection, though it is vague, was that he was painting flowers. He told me when I came in he wanted to use that as the album cover.

"I had this great album cover with me, but instead of showing everyone what I had, I decided to take a couple of days and walk round the mountains and calm myself down. Then I said to Jon, 'I can't do that – I'm going home.' The irony was – which made my actions seem so ridiculous – that they didn't use Jon's cover but as I wasn't there, they went to Hipgnosis. I think Chris was friends with Storm and Po.

"It was an incredible help to my career to be associated with Yes, and it was nearly always fun. I wasn't asked to do the logo; for me it just seemed natural. The *Tales From Topographic Oceans* tour... no-one had done a coast-to-coast merchandising programme for a band before, a brand identity for a band before, or a theatrical stage. Musicians had been theatrical, Peter Gabriel, David Bowie... but there hadn't been a theatrical stage before. There were a lot of firsts." ●

Roger Dean in 1972; and (right) his sleeves for Osibisa and Yes

Latest Roger Dean news at www.rogerdean.com

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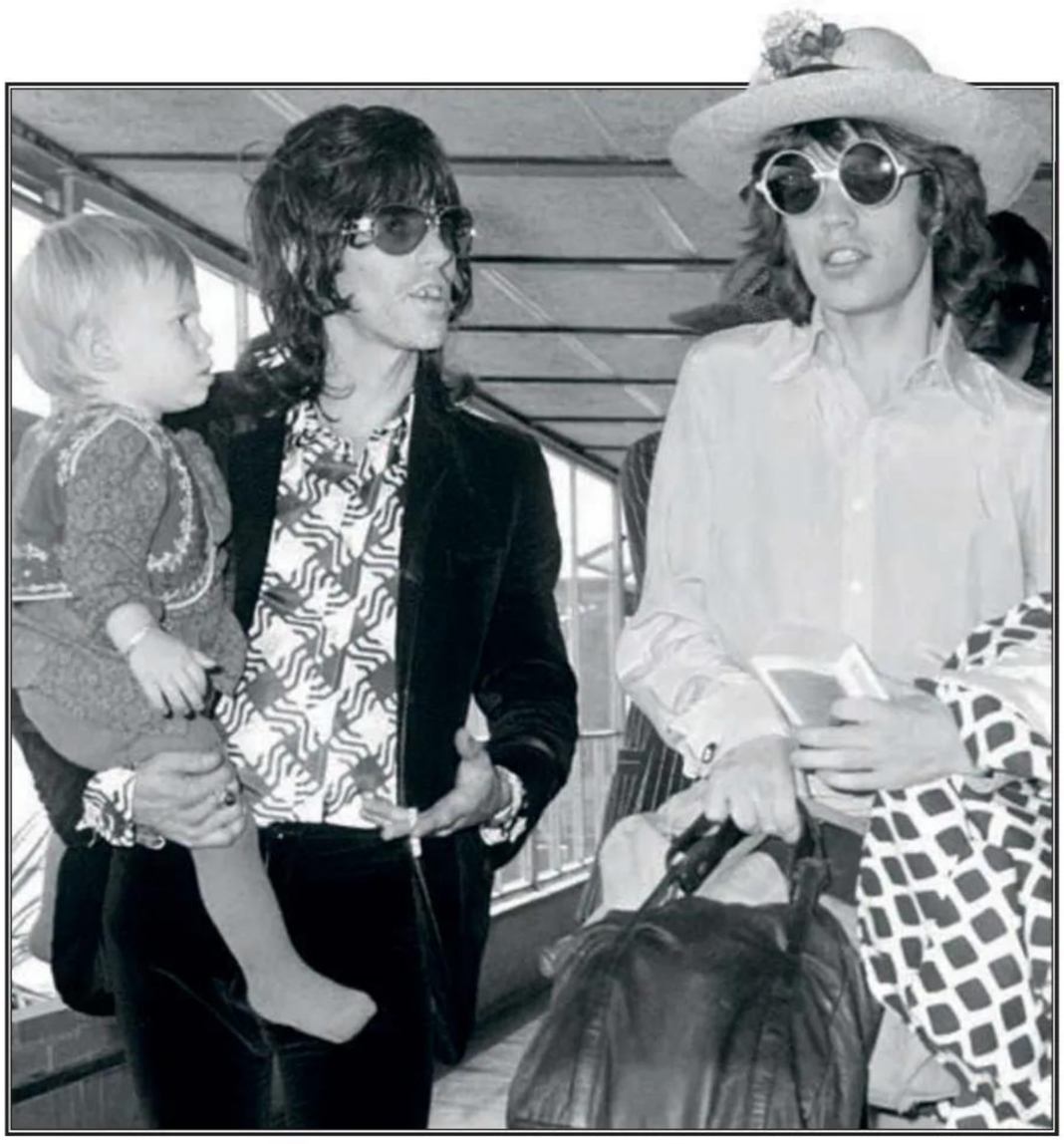

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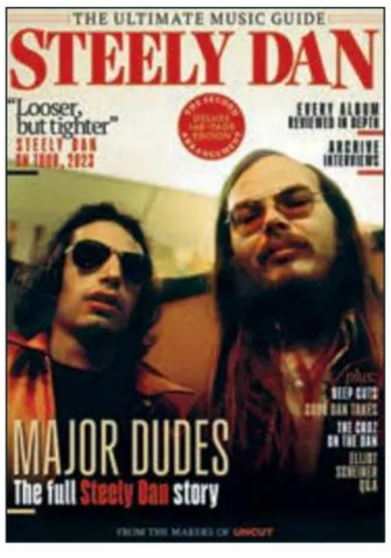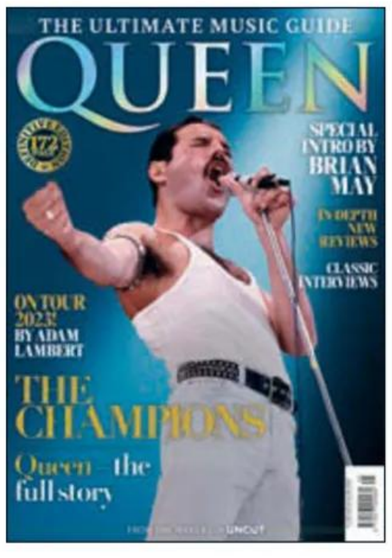
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